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Sg women

Perfect Little Feminists: Resistance, femininity, and violence in the "Powerpuff Girls."

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Introduction

Several years ago while assisting at a summer camp, I chanced to find a group of young girls watching a television program that struck me as so strange I prompted the girls to turn the television off and go play outside. The cartoon program they had been watching showed sweet-looking little girls engaging in vicious acts of violence. In the brief moments that I saw the cartoon I became convinced that no good could come from such depictions of mindless violence. I thought no more of this program, never suspecting how my rushed conclusions would come back to haunt me. So, I was surprised last year to meet several fellow university students who were huge fans of those very same little cartoon characters. I became increasingly curious about the cause of this cartoon's popularity and, after watching several episodes, soon found myself enjoying the very same program I had previously disdained.

After critically viewing the Powerpuff Girls, I found that this show is not entirely what it appears to be. On the surface, it is the violent, trivial cartoon that I first believed it to be. However, as I will show through textual analysis, once the surface is peeled away, there is room for an alternative reading that explores how the show may be empowering to young female viewers. The purpose of my study, then, is to explore how the program depicts gender, violence, and relationships in a manner that is open to alternative readings. My main argument is that by creating unique characters and subverting dominant gender representations, the show offers an opportunity for resistance reading of the text by young female viewers. Specifically, the three lead characters offer an alternative type of heroine and/or role model than is depicted in such Disney characters as Show White, Sleeping Beauty or Cinderella. The violence that I first found fault with is actually an integral aspect of the alternative heroine, showing girls engaging in the type of violence usually only seen in boys.

Based on studies I have explored, I propose to situate my research in the broad area of children and media, while focusing on the possibility of resistance reading in children's cartoons. While in-depth qualitative research has explored Disney films at length, little study of this type has addressed television cartoons. My study will add to a fairly underdeveloped area of research by focusing specifically on cartoons that may affect young girls and by engaging in the material in a way that does not involve coding violent content, but looks at broader gender and cultural issues. I will conduct a qualitative textual analysis that explores not just violence, but also gender representations. This paper will outline the theories that inform my analysis and explain my methodology, including my strategy for data collection and conceptual and operational definitions. I will then review pertinent literature to provide a foundation for my analysis.

Theories

My analysis of the Powerpuff Girls draws heavily from theories of resistance reading and liberal feminism. The key ideals of these theories shaped both the way that I conducted the study as well as provided a foundation for some of the key themes that emerged from the Powerpuff Girls.

Stuart Hall first developed the theory of resistance reading by arguing that even though every text is subject to its inherent historical ideologies and encoded messages, all texts are still open to viewer interpretation (Hall, 1984). Viewers may interpret media messages through three different readings: dominant reading, negotiated reading, or oppositional reading. Dominant reading occurs when the viewer does not question media content, but simply accepts the intended dominant message. Negotiated readings involve interpreting the text with some dominant messages still intact, but in the context of personal experiences and peer influence. An oppositional reading is one that completely rejects the dominant message and instead interprets the message to mean something different. I will argue that the Powerpuff Girls provides the opportunity for resistance readings on at least the negotiated level, if not the oppositional level.

A liberal feminist background contributes to my analysis in two key ways. First, the content of the Powerpuff Girls depicts, in many cases, the ideals of liberal feminism. According to Steeves, "[l]iberal theory assumes that rational mental development is the highest human ideal and that the state should act to assure equal opportunities for all in pursuing this goal and associated ones," (1987). Although Steeves and others have criticized the failings of liberal feminism, the notion that males and females should be equal, able to engage in the same activities, and treated equally, underlies several themes that emerge in the Powerpuff Girls. Secondly, my own sympathies toward the ideals of liberal feminism contribute to my interpretation of the Powerpuff Girls.

Literature Review

The literature that informs my study comes from several areas of scholarship, including feminist studies, violence in media, and resistance reading. The following studies illustrate and explain the theories and methods I have utilized in my analysis. In addition, these works also shape many of my key points and helped me identify certain themes that emerge from the Powerpuff Girls.

Feminist scholars have shown that the media play an active role in framing feminist issues, as well as defining what it means to be a feminist. According to Bradley (1998), this shaping of feminism has played out in mainstream media and feminist publications such as *The Feminine Mystique* and *Ms.* magazine. Hinds and Stacy (2001) outline three iconic images of feminism and argue that media has helped create each one. Feminists who are portrayed as angry bra-burners may be written off by the general public, while Princess Diana may be seen as "a fantasy reconciliation between feminism and femininity" (169). Of specific interest to the study of feminist messages in the Powerpuff Girls is the third iconic feminist: a woman who kills her violent husband. My analysis explores what might happen when violence and femininity intersect, as well as the possible consequences for what it means to be a feminist. Examining the Powerpuff Girls offers insight into how young audiences may be introduced to images of feminism and what definition of feminism they might receive.

In addition to shaping the definition of feminism, media may also engage in the commodification of feminism. Kachgal (2002) analyzed NikeGodess.com to show how feminism is appropriated as a marketing tool. Thus, consumers are lead to believe that buying a certain product will define them as feminists. Again, the very meaning of "feminist" is being defined by the advertising campaigns and images utilized. The mass marketing of merchandise designed to promote the Powerpuff Girls could serve the same function as NikeGodess.com: to commodify the image of a strong, independent girl.

However, as Rhode points out, "audiences always exert some control over the message they receive" (9). Although feminist issues and identities continue to be misrepresented or even shunned from public discourse, recent years have seen a growth in awareness and acceptance of feminist issues. The theory that consumers may resist, and even influence, media messages shapes my interpretation of the Powerpuff Girls. Using Hall's model of resistance reading Meenakshi Gigi Durham offers a wide view of research on the subject, while Ana C. Garner's article focuses on a specific study involving resistance reading. In addition, Sharon D. Downey offers a resistance reading of a Disney film and Jill Birnie Henke et al. conduct a feminist reading of five Disney films. Exploring the first two articles, which focus on audiences' ability to engage in resistance reading, serves as a starting point to look at the next two studies that are, in effect, examples of resistance readings by the researchers.

Durham compares theories in resistance reading and studies on young girls' media to conclude that simply studying an individual's resistance reading habits neglects to take into consideration community and peer influence. Durham argues that media contributes to the "cultural confinement and repression of girls" (211) and uses Hall's model to outline how young girls engage in each level of message decoding. Durham points out that many young girls are susceptible to dominant reading and do not look for alternative messages. For example, Pipher (1994) notes that young girls are particularly susceptible to images of celebrities and often model themselves after celebrities. However, Durham goes on to state "some girls do seem to be able to engage in negotiated readings of media texts" (219). Duke (1995) found that girls interpret the content of magazines based in part on peer influence. Finally, Durham concludes that there is little evidence to suggest the young girls engage in oppositional readings of the material. The level at which girls can interpret media messages depends a great deal on whether they discuss the texts with other girls. Durham provides evidence of "the crucial role of women's relationships with other women in their constructions of social reality" (215). However, Durham also points out "the ability of audiences to actively interpret and reappropriate texts is severely constrained by certain factors" (216). These constraints include the cultural context in which the girls live, as well as whether the text even allows for the possibility of an oppositional reading.

Although my study deals with a television program, Garner's work on resistance reading by adolescent girls of messages in fiction books provides an example of how resistance reading occurs and examines potential long-term effects. Garner conducted a study of 84 adult women in order to understand how adolescent reading habits influenced their sense of self. The study participants write "reading autobiographies," which Garner used to determine that as children the majority of the women were actively choosing to read books with characters that challenged the idea of a "perfect girl." Characters such as Scarlett O'Hara and Nancy Drew were smart and sassy girls to whom the women could relate, rather than the more sweet and ideal characters in the Bobsey Twins series, which the women rejected. Garner's article provides evidence of resistance reading by young girls and parallels my contention that the Powerpuff Girls provides an outlet for resistance reading. Specifically, I explore how the program seems like a typical violent cartoon, but the characters' personalities provide a strong opportunity for young girls to identify with them and find the strong, smart, and sassy role models Garner discussed.

The content of Disney movies has been widely researched, with Women's Studies in Communication devoting an entire special issue in the summer of 1996 to Disney movies. Scholars have explored a range of issues from sexual imagery to colonialism. Many of these studies have shown that Disney is entrenched in the practice of producing misrepresentations of women and unrealistic fairy tale worlds (Griffin, 2000; Downey, 1996; Henke et al., 1996). While Durham and Garner discuss and study the concept of resistance reading, Downey offers a study which is, in itself, a resistance reading of Disney content. She engages in an alternative analysis of Disney's "Beauty and the Beast" by proposing that the depiction of gender roles and relations in the film can be interpreted as empowering to female viewers. Although Downey allows that portions of the film focus on the male perspective, she also outlines many other scenes and central themes that show Belle, the lead female character, as intelligent, acting with her own agency, and guiding the plot of the film. For example, the film opens with Belle reading and refusing to marry the town's most eligible bachelor. Both of these actions are entirely contrary to the norm of Disney movies, which will be discussed in greater detail later in this review. In another example of personal agency, Belle chooses to take her father's place as the Beast's prisoner. Finally, at the end of the film, she chooses to defy her neighbors by warning the Beast that he is to be attacked by the townspeople.

Downey also addresses the issue of "female glance" as an alternative to "male gaze." Images that show the female perspective, Downey argues, make female viewers more likely to relate to, and be empowered by, the characters than if the female characters are shown as objects that invite the "male gaze." Downey points out that by establishing Belle's identity and agency and by having the plot revolve around her actions rather than her beauty, the film invites "female glance."

Henke et al study the development of the female self over the course of five Disney films. Henke et al contend that some images depict what the "perfect girl" should be and argue that female consumers are caught between contradictory concepts. On one hand, dominant social and media messages show that girls must be kind, calm, quiet, and selfless. On the other hand, girls are then confronted with real life situations that make them angry or make them want to have their own opinions and desires heard. This conflict can lead to the girls' voices being silenced, and a resulting loss of self. Henke et al further argue that Disney contributes to the problem by showing such "ideal" females as Cinderella and Sleeping Beauty. These two early characters were "helpless, passive victims who need protection" (234). The two go on to be rescued and live happily ever after with a fairy tale prince. Although the two have dreams, they possess no agency to make those dreams come true, but must depend on male for fulfillment.

The same inability to enact change is present in Ariel, the lead character of "The Little Mermaid." While Ariel is far more active than the two previous characters and does rebel against her father and the rules of her kingdom, in the end she must depend on males to make her dreams come true. Henke et al make essentially the same observations about Beauty and the Beast as Downey did, yet point out that Belle is still just another Caucasian girl who ends up with a fairy tale wedding. In all four of these films, there is no evidence of the lead characters having strong relationships with other female characters. All four heroines are motherless and lack even close female friends. Based on this, the characters are virtually solitary females in male dominated environments.

The last film in the study provided a very different perspective from the previous four, as "Pocahontas" was shown to be Disney's most empowering achievement. Unlike the other four characters, Pocahontas is not Caucasian and does not end up with a wedding. In fact, she rejects two offers of marriage in favor of serving her people. Also unique is her strong bond with other female characters in the film, and the fact that she makes her own dreams come true on her own terms. Recall that in the study by Durham, the ability to resist dominant messages and ideals was strongly linked to the role of women's relationships with other women. The bond that Pocahontas has with her female friends provides a sense of place and an alternative to the dominant male opinion.

However, Henke et al still argue that Disney joins other media in bombarding young girls with the image of what they should be and of what the "perfect girl" is. The studies that provide discussion of this "perfect girl" image serve as a launch pad for my contention that the *Powerpuff Girls* are actively at odds with this image. The Powerpuff Girls opens with the narrator saying that the girls are "perfect," but the content of the show proves that "perfect" can have many different meanings. Exploring the alternative "perfect girl" will be a large focus of my analysis. While the notion of an ideal "perfect girl" does exist, the *Powerpuff Girls* actually suggest that the "perfect girl" is, in fact, simply a girl with talents, faults, and the ability to learn from mistakes.

Although much of the research on animated content has focused on children's programming, some analysis has also gone toward examining cartoons that appeal to adults as well (Cherniavsky). Recent marketing efforts have been successful in promoting the appeal of the Powerpuff Girls to Generation X women, but my study will still focus on the possibility of resistance reading by young viewers. While my study is about an animated program, feminist research on other media genres informed my analysis. Projansky and Vande Berg (2000) explore the feminist, and possibly empowering, messages in *Sabrina, the Teenage Witch*. This study concludes that even though the show contains many empowering messages and often blurs gender lines, an overwhelming amount of content actually reinforces stereotypical gender roles. Sabrina articulates feminist ideals of gender equality, but then reverts to day dreaming about her boyfriend and worrying about what clothes to wear.

Finally, the study of violence in media content and its potential effect on young viewers have long been a focus of media researchers. Many content analyses and experimental studies have also been conducted to explore the violence in television cartoon programming (Poulos, Harvey and Liebert, 1976). Experimental studies have found that there is a difference in the viewing habits of girls and boys, as well as a difference in the viewing habits of children of different ages (Nathanson and Cantor, 1997). Boys are more commonly drawn to violent programming than girls and the interest in violent programming decreases as children of both sexes age. There is also some indication that children consciously choose what programming they watch and that the influence of media can be altered depending on whether children view television alone, with peers, or with adult mediators (Jason and Hanaway, 1997; Anderson and Lorch, 1983; Cullingham, 1984).

When studying violence in media, there is also the issue of what type of violence is being depicted. Gerbner and Berkowitz have suggested that audience reactions differ depending on whether the violence is "happy" or "justified" (Berkowitz, 1963; Gerbner, 1986). The argument has been made that children are drawn to violence that promotes the restoration of justice and order (Nathanson and Cantor, 1997). Overall, the theory that children are active viewers and that the viewing context may shape the influence of media messages is directly linked to Stuart Hall's theory of resistance reading, which involves interpreting media messages to mean something other than the intended or dominant message.

While Gerbner and others have used quantitative methods such as content analyses and experiments to explore violent cartoon content, still other scholars have used qualitative methods to explore the gender representations in animated content. The Summer 1996 edition of *Women's Studies in Communication* offered a special edition on images in Disney movies. Disney has been fairly well researched, with scholars addressing a range of issues from sexual imagery to colonialism. Many of these studies have shown that Disney is entrenched in the practice of producing misrepresentations of women and unrealistic fairy tale worlds (Griffin, 2000; Downey, 1996; Henke et al., 1996).

Overall, the readings that inform my study explore the concept of resistance reading by young girls, as well as feminist readings of Disney's animated films. This and other literature conclude that cartoons are overwhelmingly violent and that media is filled with misrepresentation of women. However, the readings also focused on how viewers actively choose what they watch and, through resistance reading, can be empowered by the media messages. Discussion of "female glance" and the crucial role that female relationships play in media interpretations set some conditions that encourage oppositional or negotiated interpretations of media.

Methodology

The study I have conducted is a qualitative textual analysis of the Powerpuff Girls. Although the show has been on the air since 1998, preliminary viewing of the Powerpuff Girls made it clear that there is not a significant difference in the content of the old shows and the new material. Therefore, I considered each episode equally and did not differentiate between the old shows and the new material. My sample included episodes that aired during October and November of 2002, as well as numerous episodes found on video compilations. The shows that make up the bulk of my analysis were selected using the typical case sampling method (Lindlof, 1995). This qualitative method allows the researcher to select samples that offer the most typical example of the subject under analysis. I used the following criteria to select the episodes that offer typical cases of gender representation, acceptable violence, and whether the Powerpuff Girls serve as heroines and/or role models:

1. The episode specifically addresses gender issues through dialog.
2. The episode inadvertently offers opportunity for analysis of gender issues by presenting images that contradict what either gender would consider to be social norms or expectations (for example, episodes that show female criminals or obvious subversion of "normal" gender roles).
3. The episode offers opportunity for analyzing the Powerpuff Girls as heroines and/or role models.
4. The episode offers opportunity for analysis of acceptable violence.

The typical case episodes selected with these criteria were then analyzed to explore the gender roles and relationships, what makes the Powerpuff Girls heroines and/or role models, and what role acceptable violence plays in forming the heroine/role model image. While the bulk of the study does, of course, emphasize the typical case episodes, the other episodes viewed will provide additional background information.

My analysis is formed around several key concepts that served as guidelines. While several of these concepts are borrowed from the previous work of other scholars, in the case of "acceptable violence" I have explicated my own definition as: "Any act which is considered justifiable as a moral, social, or emotional means to an end, or which serves as a quick and easy solution to a problem, with no pain or consequence shown. Violence will be understood as 'any act that serves to diminish in some physical, social, or emotional manner (Potter et al., 1995)'". I have operationally defined this concept in order to utilize it in my analysis.[i] In addition, Potter's definition of violence was also operationally defined.[ii]

The next concepts define the characteristics of a "heroine" or a "role model." For my purposes, a heroine is a character who is "by definition, known for courage and nobility of purpose, thereby uplifting our own ambitions out of narrow, self-centered concerns" (Singer, 1991).[iii] A role model will be understood as a character with "skills or qualities that [another] lacks and yet admires and wishes to emulate" (Anderson & Ramsey, 1990).[iv]

The Story of the Powerpuff Girls

As previously noted, this program is targeted at young girls, but marketing efforts recognize its crossover popularity with older audiences. Stores that target Generation X viewers sell tough, girl-power items, such as t-shirts, as well as more feminine merchandise such as plush dolls.[v] In addition, the cartoon has now become a multimedia phenomenon, with the release of a full length animated movie and a PlayStation2 video game. These publicity outlets may add to the transgenerational appeal of the cartoon and boost audiences. However, this may also relate to Kachgal's study that shows the commodification of feminism. While this knowledge of marketing to older audiences does inform my analysis as background information, I will still focus on the issues concerning young female viewers.

Examining the characters of this program and characteristics of the town in which it is set is the first step in understanding how the *Powerpuff Girls* can be considered empowering the young female viewers. The *Powerpuff Girls* is set in the fictional City of Townsville and is home to the main characters and their many adventures. The title characters are three young sisters who were scientifically created when Professor Utonium mixed "sugar, spice, and everything nice" to create the "perfect little girls." During this process, Chemical X accidentally spilled into the formula and the "perfect little girls" ended up with superpowers. So, now these kindergartners not only attend Pokey Oaks Elementary School, but also "fight crime and the forces of evil." Already these characters represent both stereotypes and alternatives. The fact that they are made out of "sugar, spice, and everything nice" provides an image of what girls must be. However, the fact that they are superheroes that fight to save their town contradicts the image of sweet little girls. Exploring each girl individually gives further insight into this contradiction.

The sisters have distinct personalities and each can offer insight into what makes the "perfect little girl." The first sister is Blossom, who is the "commander and the leader." Blossom is strong willed and "typical" in many ways. Her voice is the closest to a natural sounding voice and her likes and dislikes do not run to extremes. She is often shown playing games or brushing her long red hair. Blossom is very much the "older" sister character and is often bossy and controlling. When the girls go to fight a monster, Blossom flies in front of the other two and always wants to fight by a plan. So, for the first time we see that this "perfect little girl" is actually similar to "typical" human girls in many ways by the activities she engages in. We also see that Blossom has noticeable faults, so she is not, in fact "perfect."

Buttercup is the next sister and fills the "middle sister" role. She rebels against Blossom's leadership the most and is called "the toughest fighter." Buttercup is definitely the tomboy and makes fun of the other two girls' feminine traits. While Blossom is brushing her hair, for example, Buttercup is using a huge side of beef strung on a hook as a punching bag. Buttercup has short, bobbed off black hair, has a "tough" voice and uses more boyish speech than the other two. Buttercup's faults become evident when she acts violently without justification and without considering the consequences.

Finally, Bubbles is the "little sister" who is "the joy and the laughter" of the group. With blond pigtails and a sweet, little girl voice, Bubbles can often be seen drawing pictures or playing with her little octopus rag doll. Her downfalls can most often be chalked up to innocence and good intentions, such as when she "rescues" animals by taking them from their homes.

Together, these girls show that "perfect" can actually encompass girls with a variety of physical appearances, likes and dislikes, and shortcomings. This is an empowering message that shows that "perfect" can simply mean being an individual. In the Powerpuff Girls' case, this means using their superpowers (which include laser eyes and the ability to fly) for noble purposes.

Throughout the adventures and mishaps of these sisters, Professor Utonium is always present. After creating the girls, this absent-minded professor took on the role of father. This created just one of the interesting characteristics of this program. Professor Utonium is a single father raising three young girls and seems to cope just fine. Besides working in his basement laboratory and constantly wearing a white lab coat, the professor tucks the girls into bed, shops and prepares meals, and is always around to comfort and reassure the girls when there is trouble. For example, in "Boogie Frights" the professor reassures Bubbles that it's okay to be afraid of the dark and that being courageous means facing your fears. In "Bubblevision," he also teaches the lesson that physical appearance is not as important as abilities and that teasing is wrong and can hurt people's feelings. He also serves as a disciplinarian, scolding the girls if they fight or do something wrong. By taking on both the father and mother roles, Professor Utonium subverts the stereotypical ideals of these roles and shows that males can be just as maternal as women, while still maintaining typically paternal characteristics.

The next most influential adult in the girls' lives is their teacher, Miss Keene. While Professor Utonium's character is pushing the boundaries of gender roles, Miss Keen stays fairly well within the lines. As a teacher she fulfills a stereotypically feminine role that is reinforced by her sweet, submissive nature. Although the audience is given a brief glimpse of her abilities when she falls into performing complex mathematical equations instead of showing simple addition, this does not subvert her otherwise feminine, stereotypical role. One important thing to note is that Miss Keene's character in no way provides a "stand-in" mother for the Powerpuff Girls. Her domain is restricted to the school and she never takes on a mothering role towards the girls. This lack of intervention by Miss Keene only serves to strengthen the position of Professor Utonium as sole caregiver.

The only other human adult male that plays a significant reoccurring role is the mayor. Appropriately named Mayor, this man is tiny in both stature and intelligence.

While monsters and criminals ravage his town, Mayor is content to eat pickles and depends on his secretary to take care of business. Although his ineptness could simply be comic relief, he could also be a statement about the general ability of elected officials. The Powerpuff Girls are affectionately tolerant of his inabilities and repeatedly restore him to office when his authority is challenged. However, it is still apparent that his character suggests the general incompetence of politicians.

As previously mentioned, Mayor relies a great deal on his secretary, Miss Bellum. While he runs around scared, it is Miss Bellum who has the presence of mind to phone the Powerpuff Girls to come and save Townsville. Miss Bellum is, however, a walking and talking contradiction. She is obviously the brains behind Townsville, but she is shown as a faceless, shapely young woman in a skin-tight red dress-suit. Although her head is sometimes shown, it is simply a wild bush of curly red hair with her face always turned or covered up. So, this character is a synthesis of sexy and intelligent, adding one more challenge to stereotypes.

Overall, these main adult characters both support and subvert stereotypes of male and female roles. Professor Utonium pushes boundaries by taking on both mother and father roles, but the other adults seem to fall into stereotypical roles. Miss Keene fulfills the typical role of sweet teacher, while the mayor is an incompetent politician and Miss Bellum is the capable secretary.

In addition to the good guys, the villains of Townsville add another dimension to the program. The most prominent villain is the Powerpuff Girls' arch nemesis Mojo Jojo. This monkey became enormously intelligent through an accident in Professor Utonium's lab and is consumed with the desire to destroy the Powerpuff Girls. Wearing a turban to cover his huge protruding brain and always speaking redundantly, Mojo Jojo concocts plans to bring about the demise of the Powerpuff Girls and establish himself as the supreme ruler of Townsville. However, episode after episode finds him failing in his endeavors and ending up in jail. It is interesting to note that, as an intelligent monkey, Mojo Jojo could be a statement about our own theoretical evolution from monkeys. Dealing with Mojo Jojo brings up similarities between him and the characters in the movie Planet of the Apes, where men and intelligent apes clash.

Although there are many reoccurring groups of villains, the Gangrene Gang warrants discussion because they present some of the stereotypes that have remained clear in Townsville. These grungy criminals speak with both Hispanic accents and obviously New York/New Jersey street accents. This is notable because most of the characters of Townsville are well spoken and articulate. However, the Gangrene Gang gives the impression that "low class" criminals (as opposed to "masterminds" like Mojo Jojo) are Hispanic and from New York/New Jersey. This places Hispanics and people from New York/New Jersey as low class and "other" than the upstanding, white, middle to upper class people of Townsville. By othering these groups, the image of white, upper class people as "good" is reinforced.

Another notable villain is Princess, the spoiled daughter of a very wealthy businessman. Princess is a clear example of an overall theme of the cartoon: selfishness and greed are bad. Princess wants to be a Powerpuff Girl and is so used to getting her way that she is furious when the Powerpuff Girls refuse to let her join them. The girls do not act from selfishness, but simply point out that Princess does not have the superpowers necessary to be a Powerpuff Girl. Even after Princess gets her daddy to buy her a jetpack that lets her fly like the Powerpuff Girls she is still not allowed to join the group. So, she becomes an enemy and often joins other criminals to fight the Powerpuff Girls.

Finally, Him is the program's version of Satan and serves as both an intriguing and disturbing villain. Although he is supposed to be Satan, Him is no more evil or powerful than the other villains. In fact, Him is very effeminate, dresses in a pink ruffled tutu and thigh-high spike-heeled black boots, and speaks in a warbling falsetto voice. As the only character that appears gay, it is interesting that he is the portrayal of Satan. It is unclear whether this is an attempt to say that gays are evil, or if gay characteristics are used to strip Him of some of his power and ability to strike fear, thus making him no more dangerous than the other villains. In the later case, the basic assumption that having feminine traits lessons one's powers is contradictory to the portrayal of the Powerpuff Girls as strong lead characters. In any case, these possibilities are damaging to the image of gays and serve as one negative portrayal on the show.

The overall picture of Townsville that results from these characters is a place where young girls have strength and power, men are shown as capable parents but inept politicians, and women can be either stereotypical or mixtures of intelligence and sexiness. The villains serve as object lessons about greed and selfishness, as well as establish gays and people with accents as "other." Yet, this does not complete the picture of Townsville. It is important to note that the town is overwhelmingly white, with other races never appearing in notable reoccurring roles. Rather, if other races are shown, it is usually only in crowd shots or as "props" around which the main characters interact. Also, the town is predominantly middle-to-upper class, with the Powerpuff Girls actually living in a "sleepy suburb" of Townsville in a large futuristic home. No characters other than criminals are shown as low class, so the message appears to be that low class people and criminals are one and the same.

As this analysis developed, several themes emerged that warrant exploration. The following themes were present throughout the episodes examined both in specific articulation by the characters themselves and through more subtle depictions.

Girl Power!

The very obvious focus of this program is on violence inflicted as the Powerpuff Girls fight crime. This alone is interesting because girls performing violence is a subversion of the stereotype that boys are more aggressive than girls. However, there are many examples of empowerment for girls that have nothing to do with engaging in violence. One such empowering message occurs in the episode "Rowdy Rough Boys." Here, Mojo Jojo has created male counterparts to the Powerpuff Girls by mixing "snips, snails and puppy dog tails" to make the Rowdy Rough Boys. When these boys go to fight the Powerpuff Girls, they are surprised to find that the girls resist. The boys question the girls, wanting to know why they are not crying. The Powerpuff Girls respond that it takes a lot more than a few punches to make them cry and the fight resumes. The girls eventually outsmart the boys and win by doing the one thing that boys can't stand -- being nice. It is interesting that not only are the girls equal to the boys in the fight, but that it is superior female intellect that wins the day. This exchange actually articulates the stereotype that girls are supposed to cry and not be good fighters and then counters it with the empowering message that girls can confront boys and win. This episode illustrates the liberal feminist ideals present in the program by showing the girls as capable of confronting and beating the boys.

In another episode the same theme of liberal feminism appears when a female villain arrives in town and convinces the girls not to arrest her by telling them that women must stand together against men. This feminist message gone wrong comes back to haunt the villain when the girls realize that men and women should be equal, not at odds with each other. The girls throw the villain in jail, saying that she must be equal to men; if men should go to jail for crimes, so should women. This episode brings out the ideals of liberal feminism by advocating the equality of the sexes. As a clear message articulated in the dialog of the program, this serves to illustrate the ideal of liberal feminism that men and women should be equal in everything, including punishment for crimes.

In addition to these examples, the program contains many subtle messages of empowerment that could be picked up through Hall's categories of resistance reading. Professor Utonium often reassures the girls and tells them that doing their best is good enough. Also, by showing that the girls have shortcomings, such as Bubble's fear of the dark, Blossom's bossy nature, and Buttercup's rash behavior, audiences are shown that being "perfect little girls" does not really mean being perfect, but being unique, learning from mistakes, and doing your best. This is a very empowering message and serves to set the program apart from such productions as Disney movies, where the perfect girls are sweet, submissive, and dependent on others for happiness (Henke, et al). Here, the Powerpuff Girls are active in their communities, others depend on them to save the day, and they are constantly reassured of their own worth.

Another subtly empowering message relates to Durham's assertion that female relationships are essential to girls resisting dominant messages and forming their own ideas of social reality. Just as Pocohontas was an entirely different character than her Disney counterparts in part because of her relationships with other women, the Powerpuff Girls are unique by way of their sisterhood. These girls show strong female relationships where differences are many, but their bond always prevails. This is a strong message that females are the most powerful (in this case, the girls must always fight together to win) when they form bonds with other females.

Fight Fair

Although a major focus of the Powerpuff Girls is fighting - virtually every episode deals with some type of violence - there are rules that the girls must follow. This fits the criteria of acceptable violence by showing that the girls can only perform violence as a means to a morally justifiable end. Whenever this rule is not followed, the girls are chastised or punished and must make amends for breaking the rule.

In one episode, Buttercup loses a tooth, puts it under her pillow and receives a dollar from the tooth fairy. She is so thrilled by this monetary gain that she promptly goes out to fight all of the villains in Townsville so she can take their teeth and get more money from the tooth fairy. She soon finishes with the villains but is not satisfied. So, she hunts down more people and monsters to fight and amasses a small fortune of ill-gotten tooth money. However, Buttercup learns her lesson when the villains figure out what she has been doing and band together to fight her. Without her sisters to assist her, the villains soon win and knock out all of Buttercup's teeth. She is further punished when Professor Utonium makes her use the tooth fairy money to pay her dental bills. This episode not only illustrates that it is wrong to fight for selfish reasons, but also shows that Buttercup is not really as powerful when she fights alone. Thus, violence in the program must be somehow justifiable, to allow for resistance reading (Berkowitz 1963), and further illustrates the importance of female relationships (Henke, et al, 1996).

In another episode, all three girls succumb to temptation when Mayor rewards them with candy for saving the day. The girls admit that they have been told by Professor Utonium not to eat candy, but accept the reward anyway. They like the candy so much that they go out to fight without any provocation - just to get the candy reward again. By the end of the show, all three realize that they were acting selfishly and admit that they were wrong. These are just two examples of how the violence in this program follows certain guidelines. The girls must only fight for morally justifiable reasons and are either punished or forced to admit their shortcomings when they fight for selfish reasons. The fact that these "perfect" girls are shown falling out of line by fighting for selfish reasons further undermines the "perfect little girl" image that Henke et al pointed out in Disney movies and shows that even these created, supposedly perfect girls have faults.

Often imitated, but never duplicated

In examining the Powerpuff Girls, it becomes apparent that they can function as both role models and heroines. Using the definition of heroine set forth by Singer, it is clear that the girls are praised for their actions (as with the reward of candy), they are recognized as having a noble purpose (saving Townsville), and have abilities that no other characters can imitate (superpowers). However, it is also clear that they fit into Anderson and Ramsey's (1990) definition of role model, because several episodes depict characters having a desire to emulate the Powerpuff Girls and the girls also have recognized and accepted faults. This portion of analysis deals with how the Powerpuff Girls are shown as heroines/role models. At the same time, it establishes that this portrayal is notably different from stereotypical portrayals of heroines/role models.

In the analyses of Disney, it is asserted that viewers are pressured into feeling that they should be like the "perfect girls" they see on the screen (Henke, et al, Downey). However, the Powerpuff Girls show time and again that they cannot and should not be duplicated or imitated. Besides Princess wanting to be a Powerpuff Girl and not being allowed to, there are several episodes where someone tries to recreate or imitate the Powerpuff Girls and fails. In one episode, Mojo Jojo tricks several of the Powerpuff Girls' classmates into drinking Chemical X so they can gain superpowers and fight the girls. However, the students realize that they do not really want to harm the girls and realize that the girls are unique and should not be imitated. In another episode, a cunning businessman discovers how Professor Utonium created the Powerpuff Girls and makes his own version so he can sell them as superpowered security systems. However, he reduces the amount of ingredients used and produces defective Powerpuff Girls. These imitations are eventually destroyed and audience is shown again that the original Powerpuff Girls cannot be duplicated. Still, the Powerpuff Girls themselves grow tired of fighting crime and try to create another sister to take over some of their work. Despite their super abilities, the girls get the concoction wrong and end up with a deformed, malfunctioning version of themselves that departs Townsville by the end of the episode.

The overall message of these episodes is that the Powerpuff Girls are unique, cannot and should not be imitated or recreated. So, in opposition to the message that researchers have identified in Disney that the "perfect girl" should be admired and imitated, the Powerpuff Girls actively show that they may be admired for their good qualities, but still should not be upheld as an ideal. So, even though the girls can serve as heroines/role models by the definitions of Singer, Anderson and Ramsey, the show makes clear that other characters, and therefore, viewers should not attempt to become the Powerpuff Girls.

The moral of the story is . . .

Besides containing empowering messages, *Powerpuff Girls* also teaches social lessons. Gerbner has argued that media essentially act as a contributing factor in the enculturation of young people (Killing Screens, 1994). Gerbner argues that television acts as a primary storyteller and that children learn about society and social roles through media portrayals. Based on this aspect of the cultivation theory, I have identified several social or moral lessons that appear in the text of the Powerpuff Girls and could be learned by young viewers engaging in resistance reading. For example, in the case of Princess, greed is shown to be wrong, while the focus on acceptable violence teaches lessons in fairness and selflessness. In addition, there are several episodes that specifically teach time honored childhood lessons, such as the importance of eating vegetables and apologizing when you are wrong.

In "Beat your greens," the girls must enlist the children of Townsville to help save the day by eating broccoli alien invaders. By the end of this episode, all of the children are eating a variety of vegetables, and adults no longer have to force-feed the children vegetables. In "Paste makes waste," Buttercup is mean to Elmer, a child at school who eats glue. After Elmer turns into a giant glue monster, Buttercup must apologize in order to save Townsville. The message that too much candy is bad (which was shown in the episode where the girls fought selfishly to get more candy reward) is reinforced in "Birthday Bash," where Him gives the girls candy and then gloats that they will have tooth decay. All of these episodes use somewhat unusual situations to get across the message that children should eat vegetables, apologize when they are wrong, and not eat too much candy.

Another example of positive messages occurs in episodes about looks and hygiene. In "Bubblevision," Blossom and Buttercup tease Bubbles when she has to wear glasses. Professor Utonium chastises Blossom and Buttercup for their behavior, then reassures Bubbles that it doesn't matter how she looks as long as she does her best in fighting monsters and villains. In this case the message is clear that physical appearance is not as important as ability. However, in a different episode, Bubbles and Buttercup accidentally cut Blossom's long hair and then laughed uncontrollably because she was "ugly." Professor Utonium reassures Blossom that she is still beautiful, but after she leaves the house he laughs at her as well. These messages appear to contradict each other, but the one similarity is that Professor Utonium reassures the girls regardless of his own feelings.

Besides addressing appearance, the program also contains messages about personal hygiene. In one episode, Buttercup decides that only "sissies" take baths and there is no point in bathing when you will just get dirty again anyway. She soon becomes brown, with a cloud of dust hanging around her and discovers that nobody wants to be around her. When even a monster refuses to fight her because of her offensive odor, Buttercup finally succumbs to her sisters' demands and is scrubbed clean. This episode acts as a counterpart to "Bubblevision" by showing that, while physical appearance is not necessarily important, cleanliness most definitely is. These and other episodes illustrate the teaching aspect of the program and could be related to Gerbner's theory that children will learn how to navigate social rules by viewing certain television messages.

Conclusion

Although the Powerpuff Girls episodes often revolve around violence, this program offers an opportunity for resistance reading and presents messages that can be empowering to young female viewers. Specifically through use of the "female glance" Downey describes, young female viewers are encouraged to look at the actions of the main characters rather than their physical appearance. It is in those actions that opportunities for resistance reading can be found.

Besides the focus on violence, the show confronts gender role stereotypes through numerous instances of empowerment for young girls. Specifically, the positive, empowering messages that are contained within the dialog itself provide a solid foundation for resistance reading. Even though much of the Powerpuff Girls' empowerment comes from violence, it also comes from their own relationship with each other, as well as the support of family and friends. As Henke, et al argued, the depiction of female relationships is a key aspect of media messages and influences how open the text is for resistance reading. The very nature of the Powerpuff Girls, with multiple female characters, represents the type of close female relationships that Durham argues is a fundamental part of media interpretation. In addition, the empowering messages present in the Powerpuff Girls are also accompanied by positive social messages. The work of Gerbner and other media scholars illustrates that television messages teach young viewers about social rules and expectations, the positive social themes that have emerged from the Powerpuff Girls could allow young viewers to engage in resistance readings and to possibly learn moral and social lessons.

Perhaps the most empowering message found in the program is that a "perfect girl" is in no way really perfect. Unlike female Disney characters that were shown as submissive, faultless, sweet and dependent on men for happiness, the Powerpuff Girls are bold, have faults, and are independent and strong willed. So, the Powerpuff Girls are not really "perfect" in the Disney sense, but show that the ideal girl should be unique, smart, and sassy. In short, faults are acceptable as long as the characters strive to learn from their mistakes; the most important thing is for the characters to be themselves. This message is supported by the theme that the Powerpuff Girls may be admired, but should never be copied or recreated. By showing audiences that the Powerpuff Girls cannot be imitated or recreated, the program is essentially voiding the expectation that young viewers should feel pressured to "be like" the Powerpuff Girls, as Henke et al theorize girls were pressured by Disney images. The result is that young viewers may feel encouraged to simply be themselves.

However, there are possible negative messages that emerge from the Powerpuff Girls. The extent to which violence is a focal point of the program could have a negative effect on viewers. Guidelines present in the show maintain the acceptable nature of the violence, creating the message that violence can be an accepted means to a morally justifiable end. On the one hand, this message can be negative, as the program seems to be teaching audiences that violence is a good way to solve conflict. On the other hand, when taken in the context of the overall themes in the show, it may be that the performance of violence by the lead female characters is a way of creating gender equality: whatever violence the male criminals can perform, the Powerpuff Girls can match. However, this is also problematic, because it creates the message that females must become equal through playing by male rules. In this way, the show very much illustrates liberal feminism, where gender equality is an ideal even if gained through existing patriarchal channels. The violent content of the show may be empowering to some viewers, but the level to which viewers engage in the types of resistance readings Hall outlines would influence how they interpret these conflicting messages.

Although the Powerpuff Girls depicts conflict between the positive message of female empowerment and negative message of violence, the program is not alone in this dichotomy. The release of Disney's Mulan in 1998 serves to illustrate the ambiguous message that results when girls are caught between femininity and fighting. In order to save her father, Mulan disguises herself as a man and joins the Chinese army. Similar to the Powerpuff Girls, Mulan gains personal reward from fighting, fights for a good cause, and gains a measure of equality for her actions. Unlike the Powerpuff Girls, though, she acts through disguise and, in the end, must put aside her sword and return to her feminine, more submissive life. However, some recent cinema has contained more straightforward examples of female empowerment through fighting. For "Charlie's Angel's" features three women who are feminine, yet fight throughout the film and retain their roles as fighters through the end. In addition, releases such as "La Femme Nikita" provide examples of raw violence by women who show little or no mercy. Whether the women in these films fight for good or evil, they are providing a new image of what it means to be feminine. Continued study is necessary to explore what these texts portray and how audiences receive their messages. Further study of the Powerpuff Girls will attempt to discover whether the young female viewers actually do engage in resistance readings of the program. By interviewing young viewers, insight may be gained into what message the viewers are more likely to receive – violence, or empowerment.

Notes

[i] Although the definition of acceptable violence covers many different aspects of violence, the concept can be operationally defined in the following manner:

1. Any violent act for which one or more characters receives praise or some other type of reward.
2. Any violent act for which no consequence is shown, or the consequence is accepted as a justifiable means to a moral, social or emotional end.
3. Any violent act to which there is a "moral of the story" attached where the viewer is supposed to "learn" something from the violence.
4. Any violent act which serves as the first option in solving a problem, with no prior use of any other method of conflict resolution such as negotiation.
5. Any violent act that is shown as a quick and easy solution to a problem.

[ii] Potter's concept of violence, "any act that serves to diminish in some physical, social, or emotional manner" (Potter et al., 1995), involves three aspects: physical, social and emotional damage. Therefore, the three operational definitions will be:

1. Any act that causes noticeable physical damage or pain.
2. Any act that causes social damage (for example, being jailed or publicly ridiculed).
3. Any act that causes emotional damage (for example crying or sadness).

[iii] A heroine can be operationally defined by concentration on a few key aspects of how the characters are portrayed. Therefore, a heroine would be either or both of the following:

1. A character who is praised by others for displaying courage.
2. A character who is recognized as having a purpose that is noble and/or beneficial to others.
3. Evidence that the role model possesses abilities that others lack and are unable to ever obtain.

[iv] The concept of role model is very closely linked to the concept of heroine, in that one character may be categorized as both. For the purposes of this study, two key operational definitions will differentiate the two concepts:

1. An open display by others of admiration for and desire to emulate the role model.
2. An acceptance of fault in the role model.

[v] This information comes from my observation of stores such as Hot Topic in College Mall, Bloomington Indiana, as well as testimony from women who have purchased this type of merchandise.

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Sq Women

Gender-Differentiated Media Coverage of Political Candidates:

A Look at the Georgia 2002 Republican Primary for Governor

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Abstract

Women are typically seen as having a disadvantage in the political arena because of stereotypes. While these stereotypes are less prevalent now, these beliefs are apparent in print media coverage. A content analysis of 146 articles from six newspapers indicated that coverage of the Georgia 2002 Republican Gubernatorial Primary differed along gender lines. Given media's importance, it is critical to examine this differentiation to understand the gender factor in media coverage of statewide politics.

Gender-Differentiated Media Coverage of Political Candidates:

A Look at the Georgia 2002 Republican Primary for Governor

Though previous years have yielded more female candidates, 2002's crop of more experienced and viable threats were in a position for setting a record in governorships. According to CNN (2002), the number of female governors could have realistically increased from five to 10 after the year's elections. Despite this potential step forward for women in politics, there is still a disproportionately small percentage of women elected to political office. This can be attributed to a variety of sociological and contextual factors that political scientists and sociologists have studied for years (Hitchon and Chang, 1995). Yet these are not the only factors that impact the election of female candidates. The mass media influence potential voters by serving as a primary source of information about candidates.

As a primary source of information, mass media have the opportunity to be central to the campaigns of statewide political candidates. According to Kahn (1994a), "the news media's coverage of campaigns can affect voters' recognition of candidates by conferring press attention on certain candidates while ignoring others" (p. 482). Previous research indicated that there was a bias on the part of print media in favor of male candidates. This bias was particularly evident in the statewide gubernatorial and senatorial races, where the media play such a central role (Kahn, 1992). The media are the only way some voters are able to see and hear from candidates, as face-to-face communication is impossible with such a large potential constituency. Therefore, if this bias still exists, it is a threat to any female seeking a statewide office, whether it is governor or senator.

Some previous research has shown that the bias in media coverage of female candidates stems from the societal stereotypes in the different leadership styles and priorities of women and men in public office (Stein, 1990; Tidmarch, Hyman, and Sorkin 1984, as cited in Kahn, 1994b). For example, female candidates are considered stronger in social issues such as education, the environment and healthcare, while men are seen as stronger in dealing with foreign policy and defense (Kahn 1994b). These perceptions can greatly influence the public, including reporters and editors who may inadvertently reflect these patterns in their coverage (Kahn, 1994a). These perceived differences were evident in the print media's campaign coverage in the 1980s and 1990s, and have lead to considerable disadvantages for female candidates (Heldman, Carroll and Olson, 2000). Many of the differences in coverage suggest to the public that women are less serious contenders than men in the political arena.

Kahn (1992) published the results of her extensive analysis of print media coverage of female candidates running for office between 1982 and 1988, however much has changed since the content analysis was performed and originally published. In 1992 female candidates were the focus of "The Year of the Woman" (Smith, 1997) and succeeded in doubling their numbers in the U.S. Senate. More recent research by Smith (1997) indicates that the gap in gender-differentiated coverage shrank during the 1990s but was still prevalent in statewide election coverage. However, there has been no look at the progress of this trend in statewide elections since.

Georgia's History Making Candidate

Georgia's primary election on August 20, 2002, placed the state in a new situation. On April 13, 2001, Linda Schrenko announced her candidacy for the Republican nomination for the governor's race (Wilson, 2001). Schrenko was the first woman in Georgia to be elected to statewide office in 1994, when she became state school superintendent (Byers, 2002). As the first female major party candidate in Georgia for governor, Schrenko had high name recognition that could have paid off in yielding numerous votes. This high name recognition was compounded by the fact that she was the only one of the three candidates for the Republican nomination who already had a statewide constituency. Despite this resource in Schrenko's favor, she lost her bid for the governor's race by almost 23% (Ladum, 2002).

Schrenko's failure to win the Republican primary can be attributed to a number of factors, including low voter turnout, a lack of fundraising and a poor showing at the televised debate (Shipp, 2002). However, as media were central in this statewide campaign, it is reasonable to assume that the media coverage of the campaign may have played an important role by influencing voters' perceptions of the candidates. John Havick (1997) found that print media tend to be more neutral in their reporting of partisan politics than was true in the first half of the 19th century. This neutrality puts the media in a unique position in the political process, as they are "the only actors in the political arena that deny partisan politics explains a part of their behavior" (Havick, 1997, p. 98). Adding to the importance of the media in the political process is the use of the media by candidates to disseminate their messages to the voters. One way that candidates do this is by purchasing airtime and ad space for paid political advertisements. This is not feasible for all candidates, as the high costs and saturated market keep some candidates out. Therefore, the use of free media or earned media channels becomes even more important, highlighting the need for effective use of media relations. In addition to the issue of the high cost of advertising, unpaid media coverage has benefits that are not available through commercials or advertising. The credibility and believability of news stories about candidates are higher than those of messages in paid media outlets (Zhao, 1995). Kahn (1994a) discussed the importance of such free media by pointing out that "the substance of news coverage often influences evaluations of candidates by altering the criteria voters use to judge candidates, while the tone of campaign coverage sometimes alters voters' reactions to candidates" (p. 482). With such power and responsibility on the part of the media, it is important to look at the way such campaigns are covered.

This study examined the trends in political campaign coverage as it related to three gubernatorial candidates for the Georgia 2002 Republican primary. The three candidates were former Cobb County Commissioner Bill Byrne, former State Senator Sonny Perdue and former State School Superintendent Linda Schrenko. By exploring the print media coverage of the three candidates, this study attempted to discover any linkage among newspaper articles and the gender-based stereotypes of political candidates. This particular political race was chosen for its novelty and newsworthiness in Georgia. The analysis of the content of six daily newspapers in the state of Georgia helped to study the trend of gender bias in print media. The newspaper articles were analyzed for length and content from April 13, 2001 until August 21, 2002. This time span began the day that Schrenko announced her candidacy and ended with the post-election coverage. Specifically, the six newspapers selected for analysis were: *The Atlanta Journal & Constitution, The Augusta Chronicle, The Columbus Ledger-Enquirer, The Macon Telegraph, The Rome News-Tribune,* and *The Savannah Morning News*. The reasons they were selected were for their circulation numbers and strategic positioning throughout the state. These six newspapers have never been in the position of having to report on a female candidate for governor, and their coverage is important to look at for the future of campaigns in the state.

Literature Review

In 1992 a large number of women felt motivated to make their presence known in the world of politics. Some were galvanized by the television coverage of the Clarence Thomas confirmation hearings, which highlighted an all-white and all-male judiciary committee (Kahn, 1994; Smith, 1997). The prevailing question of fairness toward female candidates and office holders was a prevalent theme of the early part of the decade. An assortment of researchers have examined the content and quantity of newspaper coverage on the both the national and local level to look for disparity in the coverage amounts and content. Findings ranged from blatant gender-based stereotypes to subtle indications of challenges to viability with gender being the distinguishing factor.

Thus, the review of the literature was organized into the following categories: the stereotypes of women in comparison to the world of statewide politics, the necessity of media coverage in campaigns, the three principal types of election coverage and the attributes of each, the roles of male and female journalists in regard to stereotypes, and the more recent conclusions about media coverage of female candidates.

There have been many studies related to the public perception of female candidates. Politics has generally been considered a male activity, while women's gender role has been seen and portrayed as more family oriented (Hitchon & Chang, 1995). It has also been found that traditional female issues of concern include health care, social services, women, family, and the environment (Little, Dunn, & Deen, 2001). When looking at these issues, it is obvious that sex stereotypes influence voters to believe that candidates have alternate areas of expertise based solely on gender (Miller, 2001). In some cases the focus on female issues can coincide with state issues, allowing female candidates to play to stereotypes and enhance their chances of winning (Miller, 2001). Little, Dunn, and Deen (2001) found that women who have similarities to male candidates are more likely to ascend to a position of political leadership.

Smith (1997) found that when controlling for incumbency and financial resources, women are just as competitive as men in the political arena. Yet incumbency and financial resources are not small factors that can be glossed over nor can they be effectively controlled for in research studies. Sex stereotypes suggest that women are at a disadvantage when it comes to fundraising (Kahn & Goldenberg, 1991). In addition to this disadvantage, there are few women who are running as incumbents. Deficiencies in these two areas have helped to perpetuate the myth that females are not as competitive as their male counterparts (Smith, 1997). These stereotypes or myths are not limited to voters, as they can also influence the attitudes and belief systems of editors and reporters who cover campaigns and elections (Kahn, 1994a).

The vast majority of research in this area has focused on statewide general elections where there were only two major party candidates. This oversight has limited the scope of the research to the effect that primary elections are basically still untouched. Primary elections offer the greatest need for media coverage, as the amount of coverage received is directly connected to voter recognition of that candidate (Kahn & Goldenberg, 1991). While issues and character are important factors for voters to consider, the first step in a successful campaign is name recognition (Havick, 1997). In addition to name recognition in campaigns, Havick (1997) also pointed out the need for media coverage of candidates, as over half the population cannot name their elected officials to Congress.

Other than the quantity, it is important to look at the content of the media coverage for males and females. Typically there are three categories in which campaign coverage falls: horserace, issue related, and trait coverage (Kahn & Goldenberg, 1991). These categories lend themselves to the formation of public opinion with regard to viability and competitiveness of the candidates.

Horserace coverage focuses on the competitive nature of politics and declares or predicts a likely winner. Typically, it speaks to who is ahead in the polls or who has the stronger campaign organization (Kahn, 1994b). Kahn and Goldenberg (1991) found that horserace coverage is more prevalent in elections that include a female candidate. In addition, a female candidate is more likely to be the victim of negative comments to her viability or campaign organization through this type of coverage. This is a dangerous trend because horserace coverage tends to influence voters' assessments of viability and can, therefore, influence overall evaluations of candidates (Kahn & Goldenberg, 1991). Miller (2001) argued that the momentum of the campaign could turn in favor of the candidate who is perceived as having the best chance of winning. Therefore, voters who rely on the media for information are more likely to believe that female candidates are less electable (Kahn, 1994b).

Because of its editorial control the news media can modify the gravity of issues during elections, in turn affecting the outcome (Kahn, 1994b). Scheufele, Shanahan, and Kim (2002) argued that representative democracy is dependent upon the members of the public actively participating in the process and that their decisions are based upon well-informed reasoning. In addition, they found that political participation is positively affected by newspaper readership (Scheufele et al., 2002). Despite this value, issue coverage is still rare compared to horserace comparisons (Kahn & Goldenberg, 1991). When direct comparison and distinction between issue stances of opposing candidates are available, voters are able take that information into consideration when making a choice (Kahn & Goldenberg, 1991). Kahn and Goldenberg (1991) found that the substance and amount of issue coverage differs for male and female candidates. This difference can be attributed to publicly held sex stereotypes showing that male candidates are stronger on issues related to crime, foreign policy, and the economy, while females are more competent in social policy areas (Rosenwaser, 1987 as cited in Kahn, 1993). Kahn (1994a) also found that strong female issues are thought to be congruent to state issues, making it easier to find positive issue coverage for female gubernatorial candidates than female senatorial candidates.

Media are not the only influence in issue importance. In a study of campaign messages and advertisements, Gwiasda (2001) found that news coverage of a campaign advertisement could reinforce the ad's basic message. This is especially important when Patterson and McClure's (1976) seminal study on campaign advertising is taken into account. The study found that while advertisements are not able to change voter opinions on issues, they are able to inform the public of the candidates' stance on the issue (Patterson & McClure, 1976 as cited in Gwiasda, 2001). Therefore, with the combined efforts of advertisements and media coverage, the public should have access to enough information to make a well-informed decision.

The final type of coverage explored is trait coverage. By looking at the personality and appearance of the candidate, trait coverage is able to humanize the candidate while discussing the experience, character, and overall qualifications that he or she may hold. Rausch, Rozell, and Wilson's 1999 study of two different gubernatorial campaigns criticized the media in Virginia for giving more coverage to campaign gimmicks rather than providing necessary character and trait information. Kahn and Goldenberg (1991) found that the amount of trait coverage was equal for men and women, however the substance was not. Just as with issues, societal stereotypes have been shown to have both male and female traits.

Differences in the substance of trait coverage can ultimately lead to differences in voter evaluations of candidates. This has led to some female candidates highlighting masculine traits in campaign materials (Scheufele et al., 2002). In a study of the political cartoons of Elizabeth Dole's presidential campaign, Gilmartin (2001) found that over half of the cartoons portrayed Dole in unprofessional settings or as the wife of Robert Dole rather than as a viable and serious candidate. This representation was prevalent despite positive horserace coverage earlier in her bid for the Republican nomination for president.

Even moreso than with the other two types of coverage, the sex of the journalist can make a difference in the trait coverage given to female candidates (Mills, 1997). Male reporters appear to be more neutral in their coverage, devoting most of their time to discussing male traits regardless of the sex of the candidate (Kahn & Goldenberg, 1991).

Rausch, Rozell & Wilson (1999) examined the news coverage of the 1993 Virginia and 1996 West Virginia gubernatorial elections. Both races included one female candidate and one male candidate. Five Virginia newspapers and four West Virginia newspapers were selected for analysis beginning September 1 of the election year and ending on election day. A total of 640 articles were analyzed for signs of gender-differentiated coverage. The findings showed that while a significant amount of coverage was issue or candidate related (44.2%), horserace coverage was still very prevalent in the coverage (37.6%).

The most notable research in this area was conducted by Kahn in 1992. Her series of articles detailed her findings of the content analysis of news coverage in print media from 47 statewide races that contained both a male candidate and female candidate. These senatorial and gubernatorial races were selected from across the nation between 1982 and 1986. Kahn followed up her content analysis with experiments on public opinion and perception of the differences found. Findings from her content analysis showed 38.4 paragraphs a day for political races with all male candidates, whereas races that contained at least one female candidate garnered only 29.6 paragraphs a day (Kahn & Goldenberg, 1991). The findings also indicated that female candidates received 6% more horserace coverage than their male counterparts (Kahn &

Goldenberg, 1991). No gender differences were found in the amount of trait coverage (Kahn, 1994b).

Since 1992 the novelty of female candidates has worn off considerably. Research in recent years has found the glaring gender-based coverage patterns are less noticeable than in the 1980s and early 1990s (Rausch et al ., 1999; Miller, 2001; Smith, 1997). In fact recent media portrayals of female candidates appear to be more positive than previous research has shown (Rausch et al ., 1999). However, Miller (2001) found that while blatant stereotypes are less noticeable in print media coverage, subtle differences along gender lines are still common. For example, headline emphasis is often focused on women as agents of change and men as the establishment (Miller, 2001; Norris, 1997). Smith (1997) found that the media's treatment of female candidates has improved. However, he also said that "it's evident that America has yet to accept the fundamental equality of women candidates with men - and that the press plays a role in promulgating this double standard" (p. 73).

Statement of the Problem

A review of the literature revealed an abundance of research regarding the media coverage of women in general statewide elections and in the primary phase of presidential elections. However, this leaves questions about statewide primary election coverage and justifies the present study. The question remains: Are gender-based stereotypes evident in the print media coverage of Georgia's 2002 gubernatorial race?

Methodology

According to the 2002 report by the Center for American Women and Politics, 26 women ran for the office of governor in 20 states during 2002; however only 10 won their primaries. Hawaii became the second state in U.S. history to have two women face each other in the general election. The first one was in Nebraska in 1986 (CAWP, 2002). This study focused on the Georgia 2002 Republican Primary for Governor and Linda Schrenko's attempt to become the first female governor in Georgia history. However, her ambition was thwarted when she lost the primary race on August 20, 2002.

Operational Definitions

To conduct a content analysis of the media coverage in this race, the types of coverage - horserace, issue and trait coverage - each had to be defined. Previous research was examined to create a uniform definition for each term.

Horserace coverage was defined as any coverage that declares, predicts or alludes to a likely winner or loser in a political race by examining the credibility and viability of the candidate (Kahn & Goldenberg, 1991). Articles that include horserace coverage focused on the results of opinion polls or campaign organization, such as fundraising, public appearances, and volunteer support (Kahn, 1994b).

Issue related coverage was defined as coverage that examined a specific issue or piece of legislation that would be of interest to potential voters. Typical categories for issue coverage included education, taxes, healthcare, crime, transportation, gun control, ethics, senior citizens, welfare, environment, negative campaigning, and the economy (Miller, 2001). The researcher added additional categories for the 2002 Georgia Republican Gubernatorial Primary, including terrorism, gas deregulation, and the proposed highway construction of the Northern Arc. These categories were important issues of the location and time period examined.

Trait coverage was defined as coverage that examines the personality, appearance, experience, character, and overall qualifications of the candidate (Kahn & Goldenberg, 1991). Miller (2001) broke down non-personality trait coverage into three categories, including prior elective office, lack of qualifications, and marital status/family. For the purposes of this study, the categories of qualifications, appearance, prior office held, and marriage/family were used. Personality is too varied and large of a concept to be accurately defined. Therefore, adjectives used to describe a candidate's character or persona were recorded.

Demographics

Each of the candidates was coded in one demographic area. The gender of the candidate, either male or female, was recorded in order to look for possible relationships between the content observations and the gender of the candidate.

When available, the reporter's name was also recorded. This was done in order to examine any correlation between gender-based differentiated coverage and the sex of the reporter. If the name was not available or the name given was ambiguous, the article was discarded for that portion of the study only.

Quantity

Articles were also analyzed for quantity of coverage. This was determined by counting the number of paragraphs in the article. Since many of the articles were obtained from Internet archives, it was impossible to tell just how much space was allocated to each article. Therefore, the number of paragraphs was determined to be the most reliable form of measurement.

Coding Instrument

A single coding sheet was developed for the coding of individual articles. In addition to the observations of article content, the headline, number of paragraphs, reporter's name, original page location, and the name of the newspaper were recorded as well.

Observations of the articles' content were separated into three distinct categories, horserace, issue, and trait coverage. Horserace coverage was broken down into two different kinds, positive or negative. For the purpose of this study, neutral horserace coverage did not exist, as horserace coverage must either declare or suggest a likely winner or loser. Issue coverage was separated into the classes of education, healthcare, taxes, crime, transportation, gun control, senior citizens, ethics, welfare, environment, negative campaigning, the economy, the Northern Arc, terrorism, and gas deregulation. As an article could contain more than one issue, this category was not limited to only one response. Trait coverage varies greatly depending on the characteristics of the candidates themselves. Therefore, trait coverage categories were narrowed to the generic titles of physical appearance, prior elective office, qualifications, and marital status/family. An open blank was left for trait coverage that did not fit into one of these categories. As with issue coverage, an article could contain more than one type of trait coverage, therefore responses were not limited to one.

Sample

To determine whether the print media covered male and female candidates differently during the 2002 Georgia Republican Gubernatorial Primary a content analysis was performed on articles printed in six newspapers between April 13, 2001 and August 21, 2002. The medium of newspapers was chosen for two reasons. Kahn (1994b) found that newspapers carry more coverage of statewide elections than television news broadcasts. In addition, the accessibility of newspapers by Internet archive and microfilm made newspapers a more practical choice. Newspapers selected for this study had to meet the criteria as follows: it is published daily; it has a daily circulation above 10,000 readers; and it is the largest newspaper in the geographic area. The newspapers selected included the state capital's largest newspaper, *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution.* In addition, five other newspapers were chosen for their geographic location and high circulation numbers, *The Augusta Chronicle (Eastern Georgia), The Columbus Ledger-*

Enquirer(Western Georgia), *The Macon Telegraph (central Georgia)*, *The Savannah Morning News (Coastal Georgia)* and *The Rome-News Tribune (Northwest Georgia)*.

An article was chosen from the six newspapers if it contained a reference to the candidate's name in regard to the Republican Primary and if it was published between April 13, 2001 and August 21, 2002. These dates allowed for coverage of Schrenko's announcement of candidacy to the post-election analysis.

As two of the candidates were still active in former public roles during at least part of the time examined, many of the articles found focused on current legislation or activities related to those roles. These articles were discarded. In addition, some articles referred to two or more of the candidates in the headline or the body of the article. These articles were discarded as well, unless the focus of the article could be determined and limited to one candidate.

Coding

The researcher acted as the coder for this study. To prepare, the coder researched similarly focused studies and examined the findings of each. In addition, the coder researched the types of coverage that are typical during political campaigns and races.

Results

A total of 146 articles were coded. These articles were published between April 13, 2001 and August 21, 2002 in one of the six examined newspapers.

The month of the year that the article was published was found to have little to do with type of coverage, tone, or issues discussed. The only exception to this was found in the number of articles as the date of the election approached; however, the average length of the articles did not change. Interestingly, the number of articles that focused on Perdue's potential candidacy was abundant even six months before his official announcement.

A total of 2,249 paragraphs focused on the three candidates in the 146 articles examined. The average length of the articles was 15 paragraphs. No significant differences were found when comparing the length of the articles and the gender of the candidate, although the actual total of articles for each candidate was disparate (Table 1).

Table 1

Focus of the Article

Candidate Name	Articles	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Bill Byrne	19	13.0	13.0
Sonny Perdue	76	52.1	65.1
Linda Schrenko	51	34.9	100
Total	146	100	

N = 146

Articles that focused on Byrne and Perdue were combined to create a total for all male candidates (*n*=87, 59.6%). This new total was used in data analysis and compared with the articles focusing on Schrenko, the female candidate (*n*=59, 40.4%).

A total of 89 of the 146 articles mentioned or discussed at least one issue. Some articles mentioned or discussed more than one issue. Most of these did not delve deeply into the issues or the candidate's position, however the issues were at least mentioned and explained briefly. Table 2 shows the different issues that were discussed in the articles coded. Frequency was determined by the number of articles that mentioned the specific issue at least one time.

Table 2

References to an Issue

Issue	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Education	28	16.8	16.8
Economy	3	1.8	18.6
Senior Citizens	4	2.4	21
Environment	2	1.2	22.2
Crime	9	5.5	27.7
Taxes	21	12.6	40.3
Northern Arc	4	2.4	42.7
Neg. Campaigning	34	20.5	63.2
Ethics	20	12	75.2
Gas Deregulation	18	10.8	86
Flag Change	16	9.7	95.7
Other	7	4.3	100
Total	166	100	

N = 166

Negative campaigning was the most widely discussed topic (*n*=34, 20.7%). This can be attributed to a campaign video by one of the Republican candidates depicting the incumbent governor as a power hungry rat. The "rat video," as it was referred to in the media, dominated election coverage for several days and was often brought up even after the video was removed from the candidate's website. The issue of negative campaigning was followed by the topic of education (*n*=28, 16.8%).

While no significant data were found about the specific issues discussed when compared to the gender of the candidate, a chi square test of the variables associated with the relationship between the gender of the candidate and the absence or presence of issue coverage found the correlation to be significant (Table 3).

Table 3

Issue Coverage vs. Gender of Candidate

	Issue Coverage		
	Yes	No	Total
Male	64	23	87
Female	25	34	59
Total	89	57	146
$X^2 = 14.371$	$df = 1$	$p < .01$	$N = 146$

A majority of the articles coded contained some type of horserace coverage (n=106, 72.6%). This coverage took many forms, including opinion poll results, fundraising comparisons, and campaign organization. Most articles that contained horserace coverage focused on the fundraising efforts of the candidate (n=69, 65%). This could be attributed to the comparisons that were made between the three Republican candidates and the incumbent governor, whose campaign war chest dwarfed the other candidates' by millions of dollars. A significant correlation was found when it came to examining both the absence or presence of horserace coverage and the gender of the candidate, indicating that the female candidate was subject to more horserace coverage (Table 4). Chi square tests were performed and showed significance between the two variables.

Table 4

Horserace Coverage vs. Gender of Candidate

	Horserace Coverage Yes	No	Total
Male	58	29	87
Female	48	11	59
Total	106	40	146
$X^2 = 3.814$	$df = 1$	$p < .05$	$N = 146$

The tone of horserace coverage was found to be significantly related to the gender of the candidate. Chi square tests further revealed that the female candidate was more likely to be portrayed in a negative fashion than her male counterparts (Table 5).

Table 5

Tone of Horserace Coverage vs. Gender of Candidate

	Tone of Horserace Coverage Positive	Negative	Total
Male	39	19	58
Female	12	36	48
Total	51	55	106
$X^2 = 23.130$	$df = 2$	$p < .01$	$N = 106$

The 146 articles were coded for three types of coverage - horserace, issue, and trait. Frequency distribution charts revealed that the most prevalent of the three types of coverage in this study was trait coverage (*n*=136, 93.2%). The most heavily used type of trait coverage was the recognition of the candidate's previous office (*n*=124, 84.9%), which was often mentioned in the lead sentence or in conjunction with the first reference to the candidate's name. Chi square tests indicated a significant correlation between the gender of the candidate and the inclusion of the candidate's previous office (Table 6). This is surprising, as the other candidates were less well-known in comparison to the female candidate. While this might be viewed as a benefit to the female candidate, one could also argue that it makes her appear to be less well-known than her counterparts.

Table 6

Mention of Previous Office Held vs. Gender of Candidate

	Previous Office Held		
	Yes	No	Total
Male	69	18	87
Female	55	4	59
Total	124	22	146
X^2=5.315	df=1	p<.05	N = 146

The findings of the study specify that most of the articles coded did not contain any references to the candidate's marital status or children (n=101, 69.2%). However, chi square tests revealed that the significant finding of this data was that those articles that did contain such references were usually focused on the female candidate (Table 7).

Table 7

Mention of Marital Status/Children vs. Gender of Candidate

	Marital Status/Children		
	Yes	No	Total
Male	12	75	87
Female	33	26	59
Total	45	101	146
X^2 = 29.279	df = 1	p < .01	N = 146

Few of the articles coded gave any background information about the candidate's qualifications other than the office the candidate previously held (n=24, 16.4%). This background information typically came in the form of education, military training, or previous jobs. The significant finding of these 24 articles that contained a reference to a candidate's qualifications was that the articles predominately focused on the male candidates (Table 8). While the results of this study indicate that this is a significant finding, the low quantity of articles found to contain such trait coverage possibly skewed this result.

Table 8

Mention of Candidate Qualifications vs. Gender of Candidate

	Candidate Qualifications		
	Yes	No	Total
Male	19	68	87
Female	5	54	59
Total	24	122	146

$X^2 = 4.572$ $df = 1$ $p < .05$ $N = 146$

Discussion

To determine whether gender-based stereotypes still existed in the political campaign coverage of the Georgia 2002 Republican Gubernatorial Primary, a content analysis was conducted on newspaper articles pertaining to the Georgia 2002 Republican Primary. Strong evidence was found to suggest that the content of the 146 articles coded did differ along gender lines. While there were no noteworthy findings regarding the quantity of coverage, significant differences did occur when examining several of the coverage types and the content of the articles. Not all of the points examined found significant differences when compared to the gender of the candidate, but enough did to suggest that gender was a factor in the media coverage of this election.

Perhaps not surprisingly, there was a small amount of coverage of the three candidates in general. Schrenko did receive the second highest amount of coverage as compared to other two candidates, however this is unexpected as she was the most well known of the candidates and led in most tracking polls prior to the last few weeks of the campaign.

The political climate of Georgia may have played a role in the lack of coverage of the Republican Primary. While Schrenko was the first woman to be elected to statewide office in Georgia, women still have not found the political climate in Georgia to be favorable (Shipp, 2002). Prior to the 2002 election, only two women held state executive offices. Of the 34 committees in the Georgia House, only one was chaired by a woman. Schrenko was not the first woman to run for governor in the state, but she was the first Republican woman (Shipp, 2002). As it had been over 130 years since a Republican had been elected to the office of Governor, her victory in the general election seemed almost impossible. Despite the changing attitudes and ideologies of the state's voters, it seemed unlikely at the time that any of the three candidates would be able to unseat the incumbent Governor. Both Schrenko's gender and political affiliation could have been seen as hindrances to her campaign and factors in the difference in media coverage.

In-depth issue coverage is a scarce commodity in media coverage of political campaigns of any type. While this study found that issues were mentioned in a majority of the articles, few articles gave comprehensive attention to any one issue. Perhaps the most ironic finding was the lack of issue coverage for Schrenko when it came to the issue of education. One would have assumed that this would have been a natural correlation, given her educational background and previous position as a state school superintendent.

While this study is not a replication of previous studies, it is interesting to note that when indirectly comparing the results of the findings regarding horserace coverage to previous studies the findings are similar. Traditionally women are much more likely to be subject to negative horserace coverage (Kahn, 1992; Kahn & Goldenberg, 1991; Miller, 2001; Smith, 1997). This was found to be similar in this study. It is interesting to note that Byrne, who consistently placed last in the polls, was not subject to the same amount of horserace coverage as Schrenko was. In addition, a large amount of the horserace coverage in this campaign was dedicated to Schrenko's lack of funds and her attempts to secure a personal loan to keep her campaign going. Byrne did not receive this same analysis despite his own lack of fundraising.

Another point that is interesting to examine is the mentioning of marital status or family when compared to the gender of a candidate. This has been referred to as a form of subtle sexism or bias (Heldman, Carroll, & Olson, 2000). Kahn and Goldenberg (1991) found that female candidates were more likely to find themselves subject to coverage including their family or marital status. In indirect comparisons this study corresponds to the previous findings. The style that some of the articles were written in lent itself to this differentiation in coverage. For example, *The Augusta Chronicle* does not use the standard Associated Press style that the other newspapers use. Instead of referring to each candidate by his or her last name, Schrenko was referred to as Mrs. Schrenko. By printing her name this way, she was identified as a married woman in each article in which her name was printed in *The Augusta Chronicle*. As there is no similar style for men, Perdue and Byrne were not subject to this subtle mention of marital status. In addition, Perdue and Byrne had only rare mentions of their families or home life. Typically these references were a part of biographical features on the male candidates and were not the central focus of the article. Conversely, Schrenko and her husband were both the subject of several articles that questioned her candidacy in light of his cancer diagnosis. In addition, Schrenko and her daughter shared the spotlight when her personal loan to stimulate her campaign was approved on the condition that she place her daughter's dental practice up as collateral.

Instead of mentioning the family or spouses of the male candidates, this study found it was more typical for reporters to discuss the male candidates' past achievements and qualifications with regard to the campaign. Several articles mentioned Byrne's prior military history as well as Perdue's education and football experience at the University of Georgia. However, few articles disclosed Schrenko's educational background or her experience in statewide politics.

It is clear that Schrenko's candidacy was treated differently by the media in a number of ways, perhaps in part due to her gender. That is not to say that this gender-differentiated media coverage cost her the election. In fact the media coverage of an election is just a part of the larger picture when it comes to a successful campaign. While Schrenko had many factors in her favor during her campaign, including higher name recognition and statewide experience, other factors hindered her goal of a successful bid for governor.

That is not to say, however, that the media coverage of her was justified or without impact. As the public relies on the media for objective coverage of the candidates for public office, it is reasonable to assume that the voting public of Georgia relied on these six newspapers to portray each candidate in a fair and just light. If the cumulative effects of the gender-differentiated coverage found in this study helped to depict a female candidate as less viable or electable due to her gender, then the subtle bias found in each article could have detrimental effects on women running for public office in the future.

Limitations of the Study

Some limitations to the methods used in this study can be viewed as flaws that may or may not have had an effect on the findings. First the six newspapers selected as part of the sample only represent a small portion of the 39 newspapers published daily in the state. Many of the articles that were published in the smaller newspapers were from wire services and were found in more than one newspaper in the sample. These articles were only coded the first time they were found to appear in one of the newspapers. Therefore, several of the articles from some of the smaller newspapers were discarded because they had previously been coded in connection with another newspaper. Finally, many articles were discarded because they focused on more than one candidate. By discarding these articles, this study was able to concentrate on the way particular candidates are singled out in media coverage.

Areas of Further Research

Future research can consider other aspects of media coverage and political campaigns. Candidates strive for favorable public opinion in the effort to get votes. This study could be expanded to include the public's opinion of each candidate based solely on the newspaper articles available.

The majority of studies in the past have included a male and female candidate. Races with two female candidates could be studied for significant differences. Additional demographic factors of race, religion, and age could also be explored for significance when combined with the gender of the candidate.

Public perception of the candidates and the issues plays a huge role in the outcome of elections. Campaign staffs have discovered the importance of media relations tactics in regard to disseminating the campaign message through the media. Further research could examine the campaigns' tactics in regard to the actual content in the media.

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Black Womanhood: *Essence* and its Treatment of Stereotypical Images of Black Women

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Black Womanhood: A Content Analysis of *Essence* and its Treatment of Stereotypical Images of Black Women

This content analysis examines whether or not *Essence* works as a liberating feminist text that dispels stereotypical images of Black women. We hypothesize that (a) there will be more evidence to dispel the stereotypes than to perpetuate them and (b) that of the four major African American women stereotypes – mammy, matriarch, sexual siren, and welfare mother/queen – the matriarch and sexual siren stereotypes will be dispelled more frequently. Results support hypothesis (a) entirely and hypothesis (b) partially.

Black Womanhood: A Content Analysis of Essence and its Treatment of Stereotypical Images of Black Women

Introduction and Literature Review

I remember a girlfriend once saying to me with all seriousness, "You can't be a Black woman and not read *Essence*. We all read *Essence*." She said this nonchalantly, yet with reverence. Just one Black woman speaking culture to another. This was while I was an undergraduate in the late 1980s. But *Essence* had been a part of my life, vaguely, even before my friend stated so firmly what *Essence* meant to Black women. My sisters and I used to read the *Essence* that my mom would bring home from her sister's house. Seven Black women lived in my home (my mother, my sisters and me). *Essence* gave us, and continues to give Black women, varied images of themselves to look at and read about, images that appear only rarely in mainstream White publications, if at all. Its masthead proudly proclaims that *Essence* is the magazine "for and about Black women," and many Black women have an intimate, personal relationship with *Essence*.

One could assume that it is a given that *Essence* dispels stereotypical images of Black women and that it works to liberate them from the strictures imposed upon them by a world in which they live as an undervalued and marginalized minority. African American women have a rich literary history of fighting oppression through words (hooks 1989, 1981). Although *Essence* magazine is presented as being a continuation of the rich history that forms and informs Black feminism, the magazine is owned and operated by Black men, and Black men in American society perpetuate their own patriarchy that mirrors their White male counterparts (Collins, 1991; Guy-Sheftall, 1995). The present owners (two of the five original founders), Edward T. Lewis and Clarence O. Smith, present *Essence* as a "lifestyle magazine directed at upscale African

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American women" (Whitaker, 1995, p. 79). At its heart, *Essence* is a very successful moneymaking venture that noticed a neglected market and capitalized upon it. The purpose of this content and contextual analysis is to examine whether *Essence* works as a liberating feminist text that dispels—as opposed to validates—stereotypical images of Black women.

At present, there is no published research that has exclusively examined *Essence's* portrayal of Black women. However, findings of scholarly research have consistently supported that the images of Black women in the mainstream press, as a whole, are detrimental and stereotypical (Matabane, 1989; Rhodes, 1993). Media images of Black people in general can be, according to Hall (1991), categorized into three "base-images of the 'grammar of race'": there is the dependable, yet conniving slave-figure; the native who is both dignified and savage; and the clown or entertainer whose existence is defined by how well he or she amuses the White majority (pp. 15-16). Collins (1991) and Bobo (1995) further refined these definitions and applied them specifically to Black women. They identified four dominant and oppressive stereotypical images of Black women: the mammy, the matriarch, the sexual siren, and the welfare mother-queen.[1]

It is vital that *Essence* is studied to determine whether the magazine validates or dispels these images because of the power it wields among Black women. Market research as of 1993 estimated that *Essence* reaches 50 percent of all Black women who earn $50,000 or more and approximately 38 percent of its readers are college graduates (Whitaker, 1995, p. 79). Of all the magazines that cater to women, *Essence* is the only longstanding magazine (i.e., in print for 30 years) that targets Black women and addresses specifically their cultural and emotional needs as African Americans and women. The magazine boasts a monthly readership base of 7.5 million worldwide (i.e., United States, U.S. Military and Civilian Personnel Overseas, Canada, and

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International areas) (*Essence* Media Kit, 2000). As of 1999, according to the U.S. Bureau of the Census, approximately 19.0 million African American women were U.S. citizens (U S Census Bureau, 2000).

The *Essence* 2000 Media Kit (2000) maintains that the magazine reaches 69.3 percent of the total Black female population represented in the 18-49 age group. This statistic positions *Essence* as a potentially powerful site for voicing and redefining who Black women are in an arena that includes a large and varied population of Black women. The magazine reinforces this image listing its profile in the 2000 Editorial Planning Calendar as follows:

> *Essence* is the magazine for today's African-American woman. Edited for career-minded, sophisticated and independent achievers, *Essence* is dedicated to helping its readers attain their maximum potential in various lifestyles and roles. The editorial includes coverage of career and educational opportunities, fashion and beauty, investing and money management, health and fitness, parenting, home decorating, food and travel, as well as cultural reviews, fiction and profiles of achievers and celebrities.

From its first appearance on newsstands in May 1970, *Essence* spoke to Black women and was privy to their concerns in a way that was culturally unique, distinct and specific. Yet, *Essence* possesses a dual contextuality. It is part of a capitalist consumer and patriarchal system that enables it to be a successful money-making venture for the Black men who publish it, while its editorial content is controlled by Black women writers and editors who refuse to be defined by mainstream stereotypes.[2] Although many of the Black women who edit and write for *Essence* may be reluctant to label themselves feminists, "as cultural producers [they] have taken on the task of creating images of themselves different from those continually reproduced in traditional works" (Bobo, 1995, p. 45). Therefore, a discussion of Black feminism is relevant to this paper. Even though many Black women chose not to call themselves feminists, they follow the basic principles of Black feminism every day of their lives.

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The practice of Black feminism recognizes a direct link between experience and consciousness. *Essence* serves as one of the best read and most valuable outlets for African American women fiction writers (i.e. Nikki Giovanni, Ntozake Shange, Toni Morrison, Gloria Naylor, Alice Walker, Terry McMillian, etc.), journalists (i.e. Jill Nelson), historians (i.e. Paula Giddings) and essayists (i.e. bell hooks, the late Audre Lourde, Bebe Moore Campbell, etc.). *Essence* brings renowned writers and up-and-coming, both fiction and non-fiction authors, together in one glossy package that has the potential to be both entertaining and educational. Most of these writers and the editors-in-chief—past and present—self identify as Black feminists or womanists. It is this fact that makes *Essence* a possible voice for Black feminism.

There are four basic principles that Black feminism endorses (Collins, 1991):

(1) racism, sexism and classism are interlocking systems of oppression;
(2) we must maintain a humanist vision that will not accept any amount of human oppression;
(3) we must define ourselves and give voice to the everyday Black woman and everyday experiences;
(4) we must operate from the standpoint that Black women are unique and our experiences are unique.

Black feminism is also composed of a body of knowledge and understanding which positions itself as critical theory to criticize and address social problems. It further argues that Black women intellectuals are central to the production of Black feminist thought. Black feminists contend that there can be no separation of ideas from experience and that Black feminism is not a set of abstract principles, but it is a set of ideas that come directly from the historical and contemporary experience of Black women (hooks, 1981;Collins, 1991;Guy-Sheftall, 1995). As such, Black feminism stands uniquely poised to evaluate the stereotypes that *Essence* may or may not dispel and its standing as a feminist-oriented text. Given that *Essence* is marketed specifically toward Black women, Black feminist theory is the logical site from which to begin a

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critical analysis of this medium using both qualitative textual analysis and quantitative content analysis to describe how the *Essence* reader may decode stereotypical images within the magazine.

Method

The dependent variable of this study is Black women's images. Existing research (hooks, 1989; Collins, 1991; Jewell, 1993) suggests that this variable can be broken down into four dominant stereotypical images of Black women: the mammy, the matriarch, the sexual siren and the welfare mother/queen. Each individual issue of *Essence* contains between four and seven feature articles. The feature articles are the heart of the magazine and the part that differentiates it from other women's magazines because of the exclusive focus on issues and topics of concern to Black women. Therefore, it is in these articles that negative, damaging stereotypes of Black women will be either dispelled or validated. A random sample of 80 articles taken from a master list of all features from four years (48 issues) of *Essence* was examined. From a list of 240 articles, every third article was coded for stereotypical images and for predominant article topic. The entire article was the unit of analysis. The results were analyzed using SPSS.

Essence has been a monthly publication since it began in May 1970. To get an indication of how *Essence* has changed over time, 24 issues published in the 1970s (i.e., January 1976 – December 1977) and 24 issues published in the 1990s (i.e., May 1996 – December 1996; January 1997 – December 1997, January 1998 – May 1998) were studied. These years were chosen because during its 30-year plus publishing history, *Essence* has had six different editors, but only two have stayed more than one year.

Marcia Gillespie (the current editor of *Ms*. Magazine) was editor from July 1971 to 1980. It was under her direction that *Essence* began to truly develop a distinct voice. In Gillespie's

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words, "I wasn't interested in what other women's magazines did, because women's magazines have been developed for a whole other kind of woman; one who had not come up through slavery, one who had not had to work, always work. One who had not been independent as Black women have been independent and on their own" (Taylor, 1995, pp. 49-50). The years 1976-1977 were chosen for coding from Gillespie's time at *Essence* because these were the middle years of her tenure, thus it can be expected that by this point she would have developed a particular personality, voice and style for the magazine that matched her own.

Susan Taylor was the editor of *Essence* for approximately 19 years from 1981 – June 2000. Under her direction, *Essence* sailed into the 1990s and become a household necessity in many Black homes around the world. Taylor upgraded Gillespie's service magazine and shifted its perspective firmly towards the Black middle class. Taylor expanded *Essence*'s coverage into international reporting and made it a magazine that included Black men in the dialogue. Her 1990s' covers more likely than not featured a Black movie star who was currently being admired by the popular press and Black women (ie. Little Kim, Will Smith, Cece Winans). Then the opening feature story would revolve around that particular star. Taylor's *Essence* and formula remains in place today and *Essence* continues to be a glossy, polished publication. As a result, this study examines a two-year period during the tenure of each editor's reign, which allows an examination of stereotypical references during both editorial periods. The most recent 24 issues from the time this study was conducted were chosen to represent Taylor's tenure as editor.

Coded categories: The conceptual definition of stereotypical images is all negative images of Black women that serve to support an oppressive patriarchal system that degrades and denigrates them according to race, class and gender. Four stereotypical images are outlined by Black feminist literature: the mammy, the matriarch, the sexual siren, and the welfare queen.

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Using Holsti's coefficient of reliability, intercoder reliability was calculated at an acceptable level of .80. Eight articles were coded for this assessment (10 percent, N = 80). All articles were coded by the first author.

An article is deemed as validating the stereotype if it uses the language of the stereotype without attempting to put forth an alternate image. An article is seen as dispelling the stereotype if it uses the language of the stereotype or identifies the stereotype and then proceeds to show how it is a myth or attempts to put forth an alternate image.

For example, an article that contains a major presence of the matriarch stereotype and dispels it is "The Extraordinary Faith of Pauli Murray." In this profile Murray is celebrated as being the "nation's first Black woman Espicopal priest," and "with startling regularity she has been 'first,' 'only,' or 'before her time': the only woman in her class at Howard Law School; the only woman in the distinguished New York law firm of Paul, Weiss, Rifkin, Wharton and Garrison. . . . She was talking about non-violence and feminism before most people knew what the words meant, and her *Proud Shoes*, the story of her maternal ancestors, preceded *Roots* by 20 years," (Harriet Jackson Scarupa, 1977, p. 91). Murray has a strong sense of family and community, but she has no desire for children. She is an independent, kind leader. This article was coded as dispelling the matriarch stereotype because of the language it used and the celebratory tone that invites Black women to share in Murray's firsts and even become a trailblazer themselves.

In this study, 80 articles were coded to determine whether the stereotypes were present and if so if they were dispelled or validated. The entire article was coded for each stereotype. So it is possible that an article contained all four stereotypes, but it may only mention two in passing and validate them while overwhelmingly focusing on two other stereotypes and dispelling them.

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The first image is that of the mammy. In this stereotypical category, the Black woman is characterized as a loyal domestic servant to White people. She loves, takes care of and provides for her White family over her own. Collins (1993) purports that this image was "created to justify the economic exploitation of house slaves and sustained to explain Black women's long-standing restriction to domestic service, the mammy image represents the normative yardstick used to evaluate all Black women's behavior" (p. 71). Contemporary examples that prove the persistency of this image include: Florida Evans, the mother on the 1970s TV series "Good Times"; and Nel Carter, the housekeeper in the popular 1980s TV program "Gimme A Break." Both characters were large, deep brown in color, self-sacrificing, loyal, humble and usually jovial. This working class image, given the current marketing bent of *Essence,* will receive considerably less attention than the other stereotypes.

The next image is that of the matriarch. She represents the image of the Black woman as a mother within the Black home. The 1960s Moynihan Report solidified this image within the minds of many Americans with the image of a controlling, emasculating Black woman who dictated to both her children and her man their place in her home. This mother, too, works outside the home; and her children suffer for it. Collins (1993) explains how the matriarch image is "central to interlocking systems of race, gender, and class oppression":

> Portraying African-American women as matriarchs allows the dominant group to blame Black women for the success or failure of Black children. Assuming that Black poverty is passed on intergenerationally via value transmission in families, an elite white male standpoint suggests that Black children lack the attention and care allegedly lavished on white, middle-class children and that this deficiency seriously retards Black children's achievement. Such a view diverts attention from the political and economic inequality affecting Black mothers and children and suggests that anyone can rise from poverty if he or she only received good values at home. (p. 74).

These two images work to box-in Black women. Being the good mammy takes her away from her home. If she is employed and providing for her family, then she is not feminine and

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dependent enough and hurts Black men in their traditional patriarchal role. It becomes a no-win situation. Claire Huxtable, the character in the immensely popular TV program "The Cosby Show," is the modern-day matriarch. Recent studies have shown that viewers saw her as overly aggressive, not maternal enough, too outspoken, and overly controlling toward both her husband and children. A woman can be seen as both a mammy and a matriarch, as with the case of Florida Evans and Nel Carter who each possessed the visual characteristics of the mammy, but the outspoken, controlling character traits of the matriarch.

The third image is that of the sexual siren, which represents negative portrayals of the Black women as bitch or whore. The sexually aggressive, uncaring Jezebel image is "central in this nexus of elite white male images of Black womanhood because efforts to control Black women's sexuality lie at the heart of Black women's oppression" (p. 77). White males fostered this image of Black women during slavery to excuse their sexual abuse and rape of Black women. Since Black women were such sexual animals, the White man could not help but get carried away, and since she was characterized as something other than human—the assault did not matter. This image of the Black woman cares for nothing, but her own sexual satisfaction. It is an image that the media love.

For example, in the critically acclaimed TV series, "Ally McBeal," the only Black female character is a promiscuous, kick-boxing, assistant district attorney. She has friends, but loves herself more than anything. She dresses in skin-tight, short suits that reveal and display her legs, waist and breasts. The Black gangster rappers, Lil' Kim and Foxy Brown, each wear next to nothing in their music videos, on CD covers and in pictures that accompany interviews given by them to magazines. These particular women, TV producers, writers, pornography executives, etc. exploit the sexualized image of Black women for profit.

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The fourth image is that of the welfare mother/queen. This stereotypical character is "essentially an updated version of the breeder woman image of slavery" when slave-owners wanted Black women to reproduce more slaves and characterized them as beasts as opposed to the genteel White woman with a delicate constitution. The new version that sees welfare mothers as breeding animals who have no desire to work, but are content to live off the state positions Black women as "a costly threat to political and economic stability." This image of the welfare mother/queen places the blame and responsibility of poverty on the shoulders of the Black mother and "shifts the angle of vision away from structural sources of poverty and blames the victims themselves" (Collins, 1993, p. 77). It also justifies the dominant society's efforts to restrict the fertility of Black women. This scheming, manipulative sexualized image is attached to the poor or working class.

Hypotheses

This study poses four hypotheses:

H1: *There will be more evidence to dispel the stereotypes than to perpetuate them.*

H2: *Gillespie's Essence (1970s) will have more images of the mammy and welfare mother/queen stereotypes than Taylor's Essence (1990s).*

H3: *The stereotypical images that will be dispelled most frequently will be the matriarch and sexual siren.*

H3a: *The matriarch and sexual siren stereotypes will be dispelled more frequently in the 1990s than in the 1970s.*

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Findings

Of the 80 articles examined, 67.5%, were written by Black women.[3] Seventy-five percent of the articles concerned African Americans residing in North American, while ten percent of the articles focused on Blacks residing in international settings. Sixty-five percent of the articles were set in an urban area. Well-known individuals were featured in most of the articles. More specifically, there were 20 profiles of successful women and seven profiles of successful men. A quarter of the articles dealt with relationships (e.g., between men and women, between women and women, men and men, etc.). Racial discrimination by White people against Black people was the third largest topical category covered, and work-related and health-related articles were the fourth and fifth categories most often covered.

H1—Th*ere will be more evidence to dispel the stereotypes than to perpetuate them*— was supported. As shown in Table 1, writers dispelled approximately 96% of the 1970s, and 92% of the 1990s stereotypical references made in articles about the examined stereotypes.

(Place Table 1 about here)

H2—*Gillespie's Essence (1970s) will have more images of the mammy and welfare mother/queen stereotype than Taylor's Essence (1990s)*—was not supported. Gillespie's 1970s articles included two references, or 4.6% of total references (N=44), to the mammy stereotype and 12 references or 27.3% of total references to the welfare mother/queen stereotype. In comparison, Taylor's 1990s articles included eight references or 12.7% of total references

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(N=63) to the mammy stereotype and 15 references, or 23.8% of total references, to the welfare mother/queen stereotype.

However, as shown in Table 2, based on the total number of stereotypical-references, the welfare mother/queen stereotype was referenced and dispelled at a higher percentage, 27.3% during the 1970s, than during the 1990s, 23.8%.

(Place Table 2 about here)

H3—*The stereotypical images that will be dispelled most frequently will be the matriarch and sexual siren*—was partially supported. During the 1970s, the matriarch stereotype was dispelled most often, n = 23 or 54.8% of total stereotypical occurrences (N=44). The sexual siren was dispelled third most often, n = 5 or 11.9% of total occurrences. The welfare mother/queen was addressed more than twice as often as the sexual siren stereotype, n = 12 or 28.6% of total occurrences.

During the 1990s, the sexual siren, n = 19 or 32.8% of total occurrences (N=63), was dispelled most often followed by the matriarch stereotype, n=16 or 27.6% of total occurrences (see Table 2). The welfare mother/queen stereotype was referenced almost as often as the matriarch stereotype, n = 15 or 25.9% of total occurrences.

H3a—*The matriarch and sexual siren stereotypes will be dispelled more frequently in the 1990s than in the 1970s*—was partially supported. During the 1990s, the sexual siren was dispelled more often, n=19 or 32.8% of total 1990 occurrences (N=63), than during the 1970s, n=5 or 11.9% of total 1970s occurrences (N=44). However, the matriarch was dispelled more often during the 1970s (n=23) than during the 1990s (n=16). In fact, of the 1970 articles examined, 54.8% of all references dispelled the matriarch stereotype. By comparison, only 27.6% of the 1990 articles references addressed the matriarch stereotype.

Discussion and Conclusion

Essence editors and writers appear to be clearly aware of the examined stereotypes and of a need to dispel them. As suspected, the mammy stereotype was covered least of all. This is not surprising as present-day life serves to dispel the mammy stereotype. That is, no longer are a larger number of African American women forced to either spend more time cleaning others' homes or tending to others' children more than their own for a purpose of surviving economically. Furthermore, the readers targeted by *Essence*—upscale Black women—are least likely of all Black women to contend with the mammy stereotype on a daily basis. The mammy stereotype was addressed twice in the 1970s and eight times during the 1990s, and the welfare mother/queen stereotype was referenced 12 times in the 1970s articles examined and 15 times in the 1990 articles. Each reference made to these stereotypes was dispelled.

Continuing a similar vein, it is understandable that the matriarch stereotype was addressed heavily during both the 1970s and the 1990s. Of all the stereotypes addressed the matriarch was covered most often during the 1970s and second most often during the 1990s. Strength is considered a criterion needed to succeed in the professional world. Yet, women are often punished for having this character trait. Black women are doubly affected as their being strong can also conjure up the negative matriarch image. *Essence* writers seem to be aware of the need to address and dispel this potentially damaging stereotype. However, no efforts were made to dispel several references to the matriarch stereotype. This oversight could indicate that *Essence* editors and writers—like many Black women—may struggle to separate the positive and negative characteristics of being a matriarch.

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A different picture emerges for the sexual siren and matriarch stereotypes. The sexual siren was referenced only five times during the 1970s; however, during the 1990s it was the most referenced stereotype (n = 22). Of the 22 times the stereotype appeared, three references supported the stereotype. *Essence* writers, it seems, are very clear about the damaging qualities of the mammy and welfare mother/queen stereotypes; however, there seems to be less agreement about the matriarch and sexual siren stereotypes.

Perhaps the inability to dispel the negative images of these stereotypes is a reflection of the struggle Black women in general have in sorting through the conflicting positive and negative characteristics of the various stereotypes. Future studies in this area should attempt to provide a better understanding of whether *Essence* portrays a mirrored image of its targeted population beliefs about the stereotypical images, or whether the magazine helps its readership to decide what elements of the stereotypes are acceptable or unacceptable.

In general, these descriptive findings of the study support the much-touted idea that *Essence* is a feminist-oriented magazine. Dispelling the stereotypes in such an overwhelming fashion provides solid empirical evidence that *Essence* adheres to some of the basic tenets of Black feminism. *Essence* strongly supports the feminist principles of self-definition and the connection of everyday experiences to consciousness. But the findings also reveal that *Essence* is a very middle-class oriented magazine and feminist principles call for activism at all levels. The images of the mammy and welfare mother/queen are the most working class of all of the stereotypes. These two images receive the least attention throughout the pages of *Essence*.

The delicate balancing act that *Essence* performs, which allows it to be both a capitalistic venture and a voice for Black women is apparent in the results of this study. By focusing on feature stories of successful entertainers, stories of discrimination in the workplace and relationships, it tends to inform and entertain Black women in the same way that White-oriented magazines such as *Cosmopolitan* and *Ladies Home Journal* inform and entertain their readership. It promotes self-esteem and tells individual Black women how to cope with work, their men, etc. without prompting activism. It plays into the American dream of the individualism while ignoring the Black cultural ideology that values community. It uplifts the idea of the individual and individual achievement and downplays collective consciousness. That is, *Essence* ignores the many societal structural issues that work against poor Black women. For example, *Essence* covered the Million Woman March[4] in Philadelphia after the event occurred and did nothing to promote the march within its pages in the months preceding the march.

There are few magazines that are targeted directly toward African Americans and that are also owned and operated by African Americans. Quantitative and qualitative studies of these magazines are rare, and studies about African American women and their media usage are even more rare. More specifically, Rhodes (1993) reports that "women of color often fall through the cracks unless a deliberate effort is made to study them as subjects, audiences, and producers of mass communication." This is especially true of "mass communication research that has done little more than document the absence of African American women in the media" (pp. 25-26).

There is a great need for further quantitative and qualitative studies about *Essence*, from the perspectives of readers, writers, and advertisers. For example, a quantitative comparison of what readers were writing about in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s in letters to the editors and of editorial letters to the readers would give more insight into the issues of class and if the magazine's focus has changed over time. The list of possible studies is endless. This study takes a small step to begin research that focuses on the mass media use of little-studied diverse population groups.

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Notes

1. Bobo identifies the fourth category as sexual siren; whereas, Collins has named it the Black bitch/whore category. For the purposes of this project, I am going to use Bobo's name because the mainstream image of the Black woman as sexual siren is a negative one that denotes bitch and/or whore.
2. Ruth Ross, *Essence's* first editor, was seen as being too vehemently Black for the White investors and White mainstream publications like *Time* and *The New York Times*. Taylor (1995) describes the former assistant editor at *Newsweek* as being "young, smart, sophisticated, and very much a race woman" (p. 33). [A race man or woman being someone devoted to ending the oppression of Black people.] *Time* magazine reported that the first issue of *Essence* was too stridently militant and that that "militancy carries over even into features on employment tips, travel, and a kind of Black Joyce Brothers psychiatric column." The writers of *Time* predicted that "After a while, *the young, urban, inquisitive and acquisitive Black woman* for whom the magazine is intended is going to get tired of being reminded of *the long-standing, dehumanizing rape of the Black woman in America*" (May 4, 1970). Ross was asked to leave. Taylor says that the national mainstream media "apparently saw the magazine as a revolutionary organ seeking to incite Black women to Mau Mau acts of . . . who knows what" (1995, p. 38).

   Ida Lewis was the second editor. Before coming to work at *Essence* she had spent the previous five years in Paris as a reporter for *Life* and as a freelancer after that. She was an experienced international freelance writer who had also worked for the *Washington Post* and the BBC (Taylor, 1995, p. 41). She stayed at *Essence* for a year that she describes as being one of complete chaos and never-ending pressure that came from White mainstream media, investors and Black men (besides the publishers):

   > "I mean politics surrounded us in every direction because you had people on the outside who had their vision of what the Black woman should be. And it was the men who were the most vocal, as if it were up to them to mold this new effort." (p. 41).

   She goes on to describe a group of Black men who stormed the office and tried to take over the magazine so that they could control the images being presented to and about Blacks (p. 46). After *Playboy* magazine invested a quarter of a million dollars, Lewis had to contend with their representative trying to get her to betray the Black men she worked for. She would not and after a year of constant upheaval and stress, she was gone.

   Marcia Ann Gillespie was the third editor beginning in July of 1971. Before becoming the managing editor of *Essence*, she was a researcher at Time-Life Books. She remained editor-in-chief for almost 10 years and under her direction the magazine truly began to have a distinct voice. She says, "I wasn't interested in what other women's magazines did, because women's magazines have been developed for a whole other kind of woman; one who had not come up through slavery, one who had not had to work, always work. One who had not been independent as Black women have been independent and on their own" (Taylor, 1995, pp. 49-50).

   Taylor (1995) credits Gillespie with making *Essence* "more relevant to everyday Black women" and for making it "a real service publication" (p. 48). The legacy that Gillespie gave *Essence* is "that she molded the magazine to reflect the interest of a broad

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cross section of Black women" (p. 50). Part of the inclusiveness that she gifted *Essence's* content with is due to Gillespie's decision to self-define as a feminist. She recalls that decision in *Inside Ms.*:

> "I had reservations, felt more than a little intimidated by the word and all it meant," she wrote. " Like many women still are, I was more than a bit suspicious of the movement, because it seemed way too white and much too middle-class for its or my own good." But she came to believe that "this movement is the only true welcome table. A revolutionary place where those who are of different races, cultures, abilities, and sexual orientations and who come from different walks of life can meet and be unafraid to disagree, dream, and struggle to create a truly just world." (Thom, 1997, p. 230).

It was at *Essence* that she first began to create such a place between the pages of a women's magazine. She left *Essence* in 1980 to become a contributing editor at *Ms.* In 1993, she became editor-in-chief of *Ms.*

Daryl Royster Alexander was next in the line of succession. She stayed one year before leaving to go write for *The New York Times.*

Then came *Essence's* present-day queen – Susan Taylor. Taylor got her start at *Essence* as the beauty editor in 1971. Taylor is said to epitomize what *Essence* and Black women are with "her flawless mahogany complexion and her long cornrows, plaited away from her face and streaming down past her shoulders (she was a pioneer of this now-popular braided hairstyle), she cut a dramatically beautiful figure" (Whitaker, 1995, p. 83). Her monthly column, "In the Spirit," (as opposed to Gillespie's "Getting Down") has even led to a book.

3. The race of the author was determined by the way the author identified herself within the text.
4. The Million Woman March was Black women's answer to the Million Man March on Washington, D.C. that was orchestrated by Black men who requested that Black women stay at home.

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Table 1. Dispelling Versus Validating Stereotypes

1970s (Total Articles, 40; Total Occurrences, 44)						
	Mammy	Matriarch	Sexual Siren	Welfare Mother/ Queen	Total	Percentage of Total Occurrences
D**	2	23	5	12	42	95.5%
V***	0	1	1	0	2	4.6%
	2	24	6	12	44	

1990s (Total Articles, 40; Total Occurrences, 63)						
	Mammy	Matriarch	Sexual Siren	Welfare Mother/ Queen	Total	Percentage of Total Occurrences
D**	8	16	19	15	58	92.1%
V***	0	2	3	0	5	7.9%
	8	18	22	15	63	

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Table 2. Categorical Occurrences of Black Female Stereotypes

Gillespie, *Editor*
1970s
(N = 40 articles)

	Mammy	**Matriarch**	**Sexual Siren**	**Welfare Mother/ Queen**	**Total**	**Percentage of Total Occurrences (N = 44)**
D*	2 (4.8)*	23 (54.8)	5 (11.9)	12 (28.6)	42	95.5%
V**	0	1 (50.0)	1 (50.0)	0	2	4.6%
	2 (4.6)	24 (54.6)	6 (13.6)	12 (27.3)	44	

Taylor, *Editor*
1990s
(N = 40 articles)

	Mammy	**Matriarch**	**Sexual Siren**	**Welfare Mother/ Queen**	**Total**	**Percentage of Total Articles (N = 63)**
D*	8 (13.8)	16 (27.6)	19 (32.8)	15 (25.9)	58	92.1%
V**	0	2 (40.0)	3 (60.0)	0	5	7.9%
Totals:	8 (12.7)	18 (28.6)	22 (34.9)	15 (23.8)	63	

*D = Dispel; **V = Validate, *** Numbers in Parentheses are percentage of occurrences.

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Still Photographs of Female Athletes Featured in *Sports Illustrated* Versus *Sports Illustrated for Women*

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Still Photographs of Female Athletes Featured in *Sports Illustrated* Versus *Sports Illustrated for Women*

Abstract

This study examines how *Sports Illustrated* and *Sports Illustrated for Women* portray female athletes in still photography. The research builds on existing works that have shown male and female athletes most commonly photographed "in action" and "posing," respectively (for reviews, see Duncan & Messner, 1998; Kane & Lenskyj, 1998). Although some scholars have analyzed gender-specific publications, existing media studies have focused largely on general sports magazines. In the present analysis, the authors sought to compare images in a general sports magazine with those in a magazine designed specifically for women. The study found that when both *Sports Illustrated* and *Sports Illustrated for Women* featured female athletes in photographs, both magazines tended to discredit their roles as athletes by photographing them in posed positions, often smiling at the camera rather than in action shots, and in attire not designed for athletic competition.

Still Photographs of Female Athletes Featured in *Sports Illustrated* Versus *Sports Illustrated for Women*

With the recent 30th anniversary of Title IX, scholars have seen a new surge of research surrounding the presence of gender bias still found in American media. While few would argue that the amount of coverage of women's sports has increased dramatically since the passage of Title IX in 1972, the authors of this study sought to explore the *quality* of coverage, as manifest in still photography. Female athletes continue to suffer the burden of a stereotype; that is, the media tend to photograph female athletes in sexist and subordinate positions, participating in individual, non-contact sports (Duncan & Messner, 1998; Kane & Lenskyj, 1998). Indeed, Duncan and Messner (1998) observed that many photos of female athletes, complete with pouting lips as well as plenty of chest and thigh exposure, seem to resemble soft-core pornography more than athletics (see also, Denham, 2001). Photographs have reflected gendered assumptions of both men and women, with traditional notions of femininity conveyed in pictures of the latter. Kane & Lenskyj (1998) noted:

> In both print and broadcast journalism these representations create the prevalent world view that female athletes are, by definition, a less authentic version of their male counterparts. This is because sports media images and stories provide us with endless symbols, myths and spectacles that equate male athleticism with strength, courage and competence, while simultaneously equating female athleticism with sexual appeal, femininity and a so-called limited physical (biological) capacity (cites omitted, p. 187).

By portraying female athletes in a certain manner, then, media contribute to stereotypes that cast women as inactive, subordinate athletes who participate only in individual, non-contact sports and are admired for their physique and physical attractiveness. Blinde, Freendorfer and Chanker (1991), for example, found differences across networks in coverage of men's and women's basketball, the result perhaps of ideological differences. By sampling16 telecasts (6 men's games and 10 women's games) played during the 1988-1989 and 1989-1990 seasons, the researchers found that commentators frequently compared the female basketball athletes to the likes of male basketball athletes instead of letting them "stand" on their own, which suggested that using a male standard as a basis of comparison implied a condition of "otherness" for women. Commentators referred to female basketball as "women's basketball" while male basketball was regarded only as "basketball," essentially identifying the women's game as a spin-off of the "real" sport. Some terms, such as "defenseman" and "man-to-man defense," were improperly applied to the female athletes. Likewise, much of the description of the athletes was not equally distributed in parallel terminology. For example, women basketball players were called "ladies" but men were rarely called "gentlemen." And finally, women basketball players were evaluated based on expected physical abilities of male basketball players.

The barrier this language creates is evident in print media as well. Magazines and newspapers can trivialize women by the pictures they choose, the headlines they write, and their editorial content. Sandoz (2000) scrutinized the language journalists use in print media and how it affects the women being discussed. She began by spotlighting a *Newsweek* cover that read "GIRLS RULE" with a 108-point headline. The picture was of Brandi Chastain ripping her shirt off in celebrating her penalty-kick goal that helped to win soccer's World Cup for the United States women in 1998. Many perceived her as a 30-year-old athlete, but referring to her as a "girl" may have put her into a lesser category (see also, Billings, 2000). Similarly, *Sports Illustrated* picked the entire U.S. women's soccer team as its 1999 Sportswomen of the Year, complemented by two full pages of photographs of the athletes as young girls with the caption "Thank Heaven for Little Girls." Even *Sports Illustrated for Women* referred to the World Cup players as "Goal Girls" and "Soccer Mamas."

Thus, media can perpetuate the image of a vulnerable little girl who needs a strong, dominant man to guide her. Borcila (2000) discussed the depiction of women in coverage of the 1996 Olympic Games. The researcher noticed a difference in the women's gymnastics coverage from the previous Barcelona Olympics. Coverage had "improved," for instead of being referred to as sexy and vulnerable young women, as they once were, they were now vulnerable yet invincible "little girls." NBC (the network that covered the Olympic events) had decided in 1996 to take an active step in showcasing female athletes in the Olympic Games. Network executives had concluded that the female audience was attracted to the melodramas and consumerism of the athletes rather than the competition itself. Therefore, the network decided to cover stories such as personal traumas, team profiles, and commemorative moments. The American athletes ultimately were portrayed as society's "little girls." As a gymnast completed her event, for instance, the camera moved from her to her male coach, as if she were going back to get her "father's" approval.

Events such as the Olympic Games can be instructive in examining gendered athletic portrayals. Perhaps that is why Higgs and Weiller (1994) chose to observe television coverage of the 1992 Summer Olympic Games with regard to gender bias. The authors found that women athletes received more air time in 6 out of 10 sports examined; however, they were all sports that contained individual participants and were deemed socially appropriate for females. The language used was often sexist toward women and biased in favor of men. Also, narratives centering on female athletes were frequently more dramatic and more focused on personalities rather than on competition. Billings and Eastman (2002) also found that male athletes in the 2000 Summer Olympics tended to be portrayed as more athletic and more committed to their respective sports. Jones, Murrell, and Jackson (1999) had found similar patterns in coverage of the 1996 Summer Olympics and 1998 Winter Olympics.

Additionally, Tuggle and Owen (1999) sampled videotaped recordings of NBC's prime-time Olympic coverage in 1996. They found that nearly twice as much air time went to women's individual events than to team events; this difference was even greater when gymnastics was removed as a team sport. Males received more overall coverage, and men's team sports were covered more than women's team sports. They also found that differences based on sex were highly significant when covering sports involving physicality, bulk, power, or unpenalized hard contact. Out of all coverage devoted to women, 61% dealt with only three sports: swimming, diving, and gymnastics.

As a part of print media, still pictures can tell stories within themselves, sometimes with more potency than the feature articles or even broadcasts. Hardin, Chance, Dodd, and Hardin (2002) examined whether the photographic coverage of the 2000 Olympics in five daily newspapers fairly and accurately covered the women in the games without suggesting sexual differences, and also to see if the papers highlighted the increasing number of women athletes in the 2000 Olympics. While improvements were made in quantity of coverage, the authors found that women still were stereotyped with references to their attractiveness or emotional stability. More men were featured in dominant photographs—a feature that the authors argued perpetuates the idea of men as "naturally" more outstanding.

Further research highlights the "natural" differences in another respect. After examining the covers of *Sports Illustrated* for more that three decades, Salwen and Wood (1994) found that male athletes were more likely than females to be shown in active poses. *Sports Illustrated* was used because of its broad popularity and its prominence in the field of sport journalism. After analyzing 504 covers, the researchers found that there were fewer female athletes appearing on the covers than male athletes (55 females compared to 782 males). Likewise, more of the male athletes were depicted in active poses. In addition, female athletes were more likely to be shown in active poses for non-contact sports like tennis, track and field, golf, snow skiing, and swimming.

Even within female-audience magazines, problems can occur. Many women's fitness magazines, for instance, present unrealistic goals for female athletes, both in editorial content and visually in photographs of highly fit models. Duncan (1994) discussed the unrealistic body images women strive to achieve as a result, and she criticized the magazines that contribute to this frequently unattainable goal.

Studies of other women's fitness magazines have found similar results. The magazine *WomenSport* was originally intended to shed light on the female athlete and build her credibility by showcasing her sporting achievements. Leath and Lumpkin (1992) examined the covers of *WomenSport* and featured articles to assess whether the magazine seemed to be achieving its goal. Specifically, they wanted to examine whether the magazine fell back toward traditional roles for women or if it did indeed highlight their sporting achievements. Non-athletes were shown on 44.7% of the covers, and almost all of the models were shown in posed shots.

Adding to those findings, Fink and Kensicki (2002) recently studied *Sports Illustrated* and *Sports Illustrated for Women* with respect to how females were portrayed in copy and in photographs from 1997-1999. They found women to be underrepresented, portrayed mostly in "feminine" sports, and sometimes shown in nonsport-related scenery in both magazines. The authors observed:

> Even when *Sports Illustrated for Women* provided coverage to traditionally masculine sports, the pictures within the articles served to feminize the athletes. For example, in one issue, the magazine provided a story regarding Laila Ali, a female boxer; however, the accompanying picture showed Ali posed, clad in boxing gloves, with eye makeup, eyeliner, and lipstick. Similarly, there was a story on Cheryl Haworth, Olympic weight lifter, in which she was pictured standing, with a barbell resting on her shoulders, covered only in feathers and feathers blowing all around her. In the 2000 Summer Olympics preview issue, there were 11 full-page pictures, only one of which was an athlete in action (p. 333).

From this review of the academic literature surrounding media portrayals of female athletes, it is clear that both print and broadcast media have not portrayed females in a manner comparable to males. Female athletes are treated by some as "eye candy" or simply as athletically inferior and therefore of secondary importance in the many sports in which they compete. They are photographed most commonly as if posing for the camera, and they seldom are pictured in contact or as members of teams in competition. This study builds on existing studies by comparing what might be called the quintessential sports magazine, *Sports Illustrated*, with a magazine under the same company roof, *Sports Illustrated for Women*. That the latter would exist at all seems to imply that the former may not have much to offer female sports enthusiasts, and the aim here was to examine whether a magazine designed especially for women actually portrayed female athletes more favorably (i.e. as *athletes*). Or, did it follow other women's sports magazines and, in its photography, portray female athletes as representative of traditional feminine ideals, thereby undercutting their credibility as athletes?

Methods

To answer these questions, 631 photographs, including covers, in the prominent sporting magazines *Sports Illustrated* and *Sports Illustrated for Women* were analyzed and coded for a series of objective variables, discussed below. One hundred ninety seven of the photographs were from *Sports Illustrated for Women* between the dates of February 2002 and October 2002, and 434 came from *Sports Illustrated* between the dates July 2002 and October 2002. These dates were used to maximize the likelihood of quality, in-action photographs being available from amateur and professional sporting events, such that magazine editors could use them in designing the respective issues if they so chose. The swimsuit edition of *Sports Illustrated* was left out of the study purposely because it is not consistent with the rest of the year's issues and content. The pictures must have filled at least one-quarter of a page to have been analyzed, must have related to sports, and must have been an athlete (i.e. no pictures of editors of the magazine, no pictures of coaches). Only photographs featuring one gender (exclusively) were used in the study; if the picture had both male and female athletes present, the photograph was not used for analysis. As the study was designed to address how the magazines feature male athletes versus female athletes independently, photographs with both sexes present might have blurred the findings.

Additionally, pictures were coded for whether a given athlete was wearing athletic attire (if he/she could play his/her sport with what he/she was wearing) and whether that attire was a team uniform as it applied to the sport. Photographs were examined for the position of that athlete (i.e. whether he/she was photographed in the action of playing his/her sport, or if he/she was in a posed position), and whether the photograph was taken at the time and place of an athletic competition.

With all of the variables coded, descriptive statistics provided an overall portrait of how men and women tended to be represented in photographs across the two magazines. Results of the coding are reported in the next section.

Results

Of 631 total pictures, 436, or 69.1%, were of male athletes, and 195, or 30.9%, were of female athletes. In *Sports Illustrated*, 409 of its 434 pictures (94.2%) were of male athletes, with 25 photographs (5.8%) of female athletes. In *Sports Illustrated for Women*, 27 of the 197 total pictures (13.7%) were devoted to male athletes while 170 (86.3%) were devoted to female athletes.

In terms of photograph size, of the pictures featuring male athletes, 18.3% were a two-page spread or larger in size, 22.2% were between a one- and two-page spread, 20.6% were between a half- and full-page, and 38.8% were between a quarter- and half-page. Of the pictures featuring female athletes, 5.1% were a two-page spread or larger in size, 42.6% were between a one- and two-page spread, 23.6% were between a half- and full-page, and 28.7% were between a quarter- and half-page.

With regard to gender and athletic attire, 90.4% of male athletes featured were in athletic attire, compared to 83.6% of the female athletes. With respect to appearing in an action shot or in a posed position, 75.8% of male athletes were in action at an event and 24.2% of male athletes were not in action at an event. This contrasts with 31.3% of female athletes being in action at a competitive sporting event and 68.7% not in action at an event.

Overall, in *Sports Illustrated* 353 of 431 pictures (81.9%) showed athletes in action. In *Sports Illustrated for Women* 81 of 197 pictures (41.1%) were of athletes in action. In *Sports Illustrated* 342 of 431 pictures (79.4%) showed athletes in action at a competitive sporting event. On the other hand, *Sports Illustrated for Women* showed 47 out of 197 (23.9%) athletes in action at a competitive sporting event. The article now offers a discussion of these findings.

Discussion

Sports are a very important aspect of American culture. With the introduction of Title IX in 1972, gender has played an increasingly important role in studies of sport sociology and mass communication. As a contribution to this area of scholarship, this study examined two prominent magazines in the sporting world: *Sports Illustrated* and *Sports Illustrated for Women*. The first, *Sports Illustrated*, does not claim to be gender-based. In fact, in its mission statement, it makes no gender references whatsoever.

According to *Sports Illustrated's* editorial department, the magazine pursues the following editorial mission: "*Sports Illustrated*, which made its debut in August of 1954, employs enterprising reporting, lively writing, vivid photography and robust design to cover sports and relate it to the world at large. It considers sports to be worthy of attention, and seeks to inform, excite and provoke by covering the subject with authority, vigor and immediacy." *Sports Illustrated* also claims to entertain and stresses that it is not loyal to any sport, team, league, or athlete. The magazine lists the ratio of men-to-women readers as 77%-23%.

In contrast, *Sports Illustrated for Women* does state that it is a magazine targeted women. According to its mission statement, "*SI Women* is the only magazine dedicated to celebrating the lifestyle of today's active woman with a modern mix of fitness, adventure, nutrition, sport and style." This difference in ideals is important, for it might assist in understanding differences observed in photographs analyzed in the present study—or it might not.

As indicated, *Sports Illustrated* makes no declarations that it is targeting a male-only audience. However, 94% of its photography in this study was devoted to male athletes. Rarely did female athletes appear in the magazine, and several photographs were too small to meet criteria for inclusion in the study. When female athletes were shown, it was mainly of Serena and Venus Williams, two tennis superstars. So while *Sports Illustrated* is a weekly publication that reports the news in sports, it appears as though women do not play a terribly important role in sports, nor do they do anything important enough to make "the news."

Does this mean that men are keeping women athletes down? Not necessarily. *Sports Illustrated* could make the claim that it does not emphasize female athletes as much because the company has devoted a separate magazine to such coverage. Although *Sports Illustrated for Women* comes out monthly and displays more nutrition, clothing and accessories than it does female athletes—a commentary in itself—the magazine still can be evaluated on how well it portrays the athletes it features. As it turns out, *Sports Illustrated for Women*, a magazine that openly states its design for women, allocates more time and space to the opposite sex than the supposedly gender-neutral magazine, *Sports Illustrated* does. Almost 14% of photographic coverage was of male athletes, and thus one might conclude that *Sports Illustrated for Women* was just as "gender-neutral" as the more established *Sports Illustrated* was. This might suggest to audiences that for a women's sporting magazine to be credible, it must feature some male (read "real") athletes. It could have been that *Sports Illustrated for Women* featured male athletes because it did not want to discriminate, but that seems unlikely. Of the male athletes covered in *Sports Illustrated for Women*, many were pictured without their shirts on, with no reference to the sport they actually play. It was almost equivalent to the swimsuit edition of *Sports Illustrated*. Men can read other sporting news about men, with the exception of one issue per year. Conversely, women apparently do not want to read sporting news about other female athletes or athletes in general without references to beauty, health, clothing and men wearing no shirts.

Sports Illustrated for Women also loses credibility here because of its reporting of sports in general, as though a women's sports magazine is not capable of providing a thorough account of the sporting world. *Sports Illustrated* showed almost 82% of its athletes in action and 79% of its athletes in action at a sporting competition. *Sports Illustrated for Women* showed only 41% of its athletes action and just 24% in action at a sporting competition. Showing an athlete in action gives the athlete credibility. Conversely, a posed shot undermines athletic stature and puts the athlete in a subordinate position. It is telling the reader, in effect, that this person is only an image to be looked at and not to be admired as an athlete.

From an artistic standpoint, a still photograph can show the beauty of the human body, but a still photograph of the human body in motion can show the beauty of the athletic body as it exerts itself. While *Sports Illustrated for Women* might capture the attention of more women with its focus on stationary, attractive models, it hinders its credibility as a sporting magazine by featuring still models in still photographs. One might ask, quite reasonably, that if its focus is largely on "prettiness," why does it maintain its name, implying that it is a sporting news magazine like *Sports Illustrated* but aimed specifically at women?

Ultimately, this study finds that both magazines discriminate based on gender. Of the 631 total pictures in both magazines, 18.3% of the pictures featured male athletes in photos equal to or larger than a full two-page spread, versus only 5.1% of female photos that did so. Naturally, more attention is given to the larger photograph. It is interesting to note, however, that women did get more full size photographs, with 42% versus the men's 22%. Thus, while frequencies were less, women did receive a degree of prominence in some of the photography.

This good news turns bad, however, when reviewing gender in regard to athletic attire. In all, 90% of the males were photographed wearing athletic attire versus only 83%

of women, and almost 76% of males were photographed in action at an event versus only 31% of females. Clearly, the treatment of female athletes from *Sports Illustrated* and *Sports Illustrated for Women* is not up to par with the treatment male athletes receive.

Much can be asserted from this study with respect to the sport a featured athlete plays. Research reviewed earlier showed that when women are photographed in sporting media, they tend to be participating in "gender-appropriate" sports that are aesthetically pleasing to the audience. Such sports include ice skating and individual sports such as tennis. This pattern held true in the present study. Male athletes were most commonly pictured playing football, basketball and baseball. There was a small variety of sports featured in *Sports Illustrated. Sports Illustrated for Women*, on the other hand, showed a wide range of sports, but they were mostly those in which women were portrayed as representative of traditional notions of femininity.

Gender equality in sports has come a long way since 1972, but women are still fighting for their starting positions. The media now recognize women as serious athletes, but they do not demonstrate it through still photography. Even media assigned exclusively to enhance the woman athlete still lag behind; nevertheless, the present study does find some reason for optimism in that coverage showed certain improvements with respect to full-page photography.

Limits and Recommendations

This study focused primarily on featured photographs in two print media outlets. It would be interesting to extend the research to include the text (cutline) describing the picture, as this could further describe the magazine's intent with the publication of given photographs. Also, only pictures photographed for editorial content in the magazines were analyzed. However, magazines as large as *Sports Illustrated* have enough revenue that they can pick and choose advertisements that are in the magazine. If Gatorade, for example, had a scantily-clad woman in an advertisement to help sell a sports drink, *Sports Illustrated* could make the decision not to support such endorsement and choose not to run the ad, knowing that it would be able to sell that advertising space to some other company. How often does the magazine appear to do so?

Additional variables also could add to this field of study. It might be possible, for example, to measure the amount of makeup an athlete is wearing, or the styling of the hair. The presence of visible sweat might be a factor. Women have had to face the stereotype that women don't sweat, they glow; therefore, it could be intriguing to see if men are shown perspiring more than women. This issue works in conjunction with the athlete being shown in action.

The angle of the camera is also a variable to consider. If the angle is looking up at the athlete, the photograph might be revering the athlete and putting the athlete on a higher level of sorts, versus a downward angle the might insinuate inferiority. Overall studies of mediated gender portrayals should continue to be performed, as they serve to inform both scholars and media professionals where equality stands based on the systematic gathering of evidence.

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AGING, WOMEN, AND LOCAL TV NEWS

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AGING, WOMEN AND LOCAL TV NEWS

On February 26, 2002, a *Minneapolis StarTribune* editorial headlined, "What gives women a skin-deep approach to self-worth?" The editorial described a popular new cosmetic surgery procedure whereby a hypodermic needle filled with a compound called Botox is injected under the skin to erase wrinkles. The treatment lasts about four months and costs approximately $400. The writers say women are subjecting themselves to this kind of pain and cost to get rid of wrinkles, because of "power and anxiety." They continue:

> Aging women are among the least powerful segments of the population. One must look long and hard to find women older than 50 leading the way in business, academia, medicine, media or entertainment. Thumb through a history book, literary anthology or film library, elder female wisdom and image are hard to find.[1]

The purpose of research for this paper was to take the look called for in this editorial. This is an exploratory study, looking for elder female images in media, specifically in local television news reporting. The time is ripe for such an examination as the first significant generation of women in television news is now reaching 50. Thus, women have been in the television news business long enough and in sufficient numbers to experience what it means to age on-camera. This research first looks at female TV news images, and then goes on to investigate how TV newswomen have experienced changes in their images as they aged. Further, this research attempts to understand the context of these questions, exploring the significance of the presence, absence or type of elder female images in local television news reporting. (Specific research questions appear later in this paper.)

When a viewer scans through the broadcast and cable news channels, it is apparent that women older than 40 are delivering news on television. Witness Katie Couric, Diane Sawyer, Leslie Stahl and Barbara Walters. The question posed here is, what does it mean to look older than 40? What are the constraints on appearance and how do they affect on-camera women journalists? Can an on-camera newswoman's skin droop, face get wrinkled, hair turn gray? Do women reporters feel pressures to stay "young"? If so, do those pressures come primarily from the audience, news consultants, management, or women's egos? What does it matter if older women are TV news reporters and anchors? Does it matter to the news product, news organization, or society as a whole? If, as, sociologist Gaye Tuchman wrote in 1978, "communication theorists agree that the mass media are the cement of American social life,"[2] how does an aging female face figure in that mixture, on television, the dominant communication medium of our time? If, as James Carey says, "news is a historic reality…not information but drama,"[3] what is the reality for older women?

BACKGROUND

The work of women as serious TV journalists began in 1948 when Pauline Frederick joined ABC News. Aggressive reporting of pioneers like Frederick, Lisa Howard of ABC and Nancy Dickerson of CBS, according to journalism historian Marion Marzolf, enabled women to move from reporting on "women's issues to become serious journalists covering hard news on regular beats."[4] The real increase of women in TV journalism began in the 1970s, when women students began to outnumber men students in journalism courses.[5] A December 1971 FCC ruling required stations to file affirmative action programs with license renewal requests. This ruling, and earlier the 1964 Civil Rights Act, including Title VII of the Equal Employment Opportunity Act (which prohibits discrimination against minorities or women) strengthened women's claim on the workplace.[6] Women in the broadcast news corps nationally increased from 13% in the mid 70s to half of all TV news reporters and anchors in the late 90s.[7] In fact, for women and people of color, Sue Lafky has reported, it was "the broadcast sector of the journalistic labor force that showed the greatest gains in newsroom employees between the 1970s and 1980s, as opposed to the print sector."[8] Thus, the first numerically significant generation of television newswomen, who came along in the 1970s and 80s, are now entering their forties and fifties.

A tension pervades the history of women in television news, between a reporter 's appearance and the quality of her journalism. Historian Marion Marzolf reports that in the 1960s, Pauline Frederick said she disliked her network editors' "attempts to turn her into a glamour girl." Marzolf wrote, "they told [Frederick] to change her hair style, take off her glasses, change the type of clothing she wore. 'I want to be appreciated not for glamour, but for my work,' she said repeatedly.'"[9]

Women in early television journalism may have minimized their looks as they sought to be taken seriously. Today's TV newswomen, while they may no longer need to fight to be taken seriously as journalists, are profoundly aware that they work in a visual medium. The issue now is not so much whether a woman television journalist is credible but just how good she must look on camera.

Existing research on women in local television news focuses primarily on women in the role of news anchor. Physical appearance was a primary challenge for broadcast anchors in their jobs, as demonstrated in a comparison of Erika Engstrom's 1986 and

1998 studies of career perceptions of TV news anchors. In the time between the studies, such concerns as "being treated differently than men during the hiring process, overcoming management's stereotypical attitudes, and experiencing additional pressures to prove one's worth, have been replaced by those related to the balancing of family and career,"[10] she found. The same anchors were not interviewed in these two studies, but those in the later study appear to have had few concerns about the quality of their work as compared to men. But Engstrom found that the more important career concern for both groups was how they look, not the quality of their work.

From the 1998 study of 246 local male and female television anchors, Engstrom found that physical appearance ranked first as a perceived career barrier for younger women (aged 25-39), and second, behind family concerns, for women 40 and older. "Women who have 'made it' in their news careers, those 40 and older, might be slightly less concerned with the cosmetic aspect of their jobs," Engstrom said.[11] The question is why.

Engstrom discovered men's and women's perceptions differ about pressures of appearance. Among men anchors, the overemphasis on physical appearance item ranked 27th of 34 perceived barriers listed in the survey questionnaire. All the women anchors perceived the top-rated career barrier as the "over-emphasis on physical appearance" by others. Engstrom writes, "Apparently, society, which includes viewers and industry management, still values women anchors for their looks, while it values their male counterparts for their abilities."[12]

When the first women reporters came from print journalism their challenge was to be taken seriously as journalists. As women have increasingly begun their careers in television journalism, their challenge has been their appearance on television---for it will matter to their career. The issue now is how good one looks, and this seems to have everything to do with getting older.

Legal Aspects and Aging Issues

The decision closest to a legal precedent in sex and age discrimination regarding women broadcasters came in the case of Christine Craft in 1981. A 37-year-old anchor at KMBC-TV in Kansas, Craft claimed she was removed as a newscaster because of image, saying her bosses described her as, "too old, too ugly, and not deferential to men."[13] Ms. Craft won her case but lost on appeal in the Eighth Circuit. Reflecting on the outcome in 1994, Craft said, "There are several women over 45 on network TV now. I'd like to think my case helped make the climate a bit easier for them."[14] Craft's case has been used to argue that, at minimum, women anchors can sue for adverse employment decisions based on appearance and age and that employers will not be exonerated by merely pointing to market research---specifically, ratings.[15]

In a recent case, 46-year-old Janet Peckinpaugh in 1999 won an $8.3 million lawsuit charging her Hartford, Connecticut, TV station with sex and age discrimination. The jury accepted the sex discrimination argument and rendered a verdict on the grounds of breach of contract. Although the jury did not accept the age discrimination argument, Vincent Coppola wrote in *Mediaweek* that age was a "hot button" issue that continues: "The Peckinpaugh case seems a lawsuit that was waiting to happen. Hundreds of TV newswomen, the industry's first female generation, are now edging into their 50s…fears about gender and age discrimination are widespread."[16] Those fears seem to be well-founded, he said, and "the common practice of shunting women anchors aside when they reach middle age is unlikely to be easily reversed, regardless of the Peckinpaugh decision, not as long as station executives feel the pressure of ratings, which turn so powerfully on the likeability and attractiveness of talent."[17]

Some women have been able to keep their jobs as they age. A 2002 *Electronic Media* magazine article about veteran local news anchors discusses nearly ten stations with anchors who are middle aged, still very popular, and considered a ratings advantage. Most of the anchors are men, but three women are treated as market icons: Monica Kaufman of WSB in Atlanta, Julie Emry of KOIN in Portland, Kaity Tong of WPIX in New York. In fact, Kaufman, pictured in a promotional photo, has gray hair along the edges of her forehead. A noted consultant group on the state of veteran faces in local news is quoted as saying:

> Barbara Frye, VP of talent placement services at Frank N. Magid Associates, said as local news has expanded with more on-air talent, there are fewer so-called market icons on the air. But for the most part, longevity lends credibility, she said. "It always helps. As you know, this isn't the business known for longevity. It's unusual when you have people who are on the air longer than five years."[18]

Cosmetic Responses to Aging Issues

Whereas legal battles against age-appearance issues have not been definitive, two particularly public cases of women anchors and aging on television are instructive regarding cosmetic responses to aging issues. In 1984 Kathleen Sullivan broke onto the national scene as a co-host of ABC's Los Angeles Olympic coverage. Jim Calio, writing in a 1984 magazine article, called her, "the glitziest of a new generation of anchors who have been packaged more for stardom than for news mastery…she lights up the dawn with a thousand kilowatt smile, enormous doe eyes, and mellow alto voice just on the wholesome side of sexy."[19] Six years later, at the age of 36, she was replaced as the co-host of "CBS This Morning." Her bosses, having decided on another anchor, still raved about Ms. Sullivan's on-air performance. Just two months before Sullivan was fired, "This Morning" producer Erik Sorenson called Sullivan "different from other women on TV in the morning. Kathleen…is not a peroxide special."[20] Years after being let go from CBS, Sullivan was interviewed about her experience, characterized as follows, "one of the primary reasons she was dumped was that, in the eyes of male bosses, she ceased to be a bombshell….she believes that her major sin was letting her once-dark brown hair go naturally gray in her mid-30s."[21] She recalled reading in the *Washington Post* an unattributed statement that she was "old and unattractive and no one wants to look at her."[22] In recent years she has been seen on various cable channels. She served as a spokeswoman for Weight Watchers. And her hair is back to brown.

Kathleen Sullivan's story raises a number of questions about the degree to which a reputation as a serious journalist can counter problems of an aging or less attractive appearance. If one becomes a "news" star primarily because of one's looks, is it unreasonable to expect to not be a star if one loses one's looks (ages, that is)?

The most public woman TV anchor to admit to cosmetic surgery to date is Greta Van Susteren. In February of 2002, FOX News Channel's Van Susteren used her time between jobs at CNN and FOX to have a blepharoplasty—commonly known as an eye-lift. She told a *People Weekly* reporter that her new bosses did not pressure her to change her appearance but she had the surgery "on a whim" for her 30th high school reunion: "I looked at myself and thought, 'God, how did I get to be 47?'"[23] The striking element about Van Susteren's surgery is that she talked about it publicly. New York City plastic surgeon Dr. Pamela Lipkin commented at the time that, "The question is who hasn't had surgery in television."[24] According to *People* magazine, many more TV journalists have cosmetic surgeries but do not admit to it.[25] The message underlying Greta Van

Susteren's story is not "value my intelligence, whatever the way I look." Rather, as she says outright, "I hope I have made it easier for others to have plastic surgery."[26]

Greta Van Susteren's "new look" received much publicity. ABC's "Good Morning America" aired a feature story on Van Susteren's new face. Phone callers commented on Fox TV. Among letters to *USA Today* editors, one said that Van Susteren's surgery sets a bad precedent for young women in that it emphasizes beauty over intelligence, and others suggested that if the surgery helps her self-image, why not? There's nothing wrong with a person looking her best.[27] The theme dominating the commentary regarding Van Susteren's surgery is that the women of television news and their audiences accept that how one looks matters when one is on TV. No one says Van Susteren's ability to gather or analyze news will increase due to her surgery, or that she will be a better interviewer or that her new look will make her more credible.[28] The surgery has nothing to do with Van Susteren's performance as a journalist gathering and reporting news; it's only about how she looks. Says Marcia Brandwynne, a former Los Angeles news anchor and now station executive, "Women who are on TV know they have to look good…It's all about youth."[29]

Context: Workplace Implications

To this point, this paper has explored questions relating to women broadcasters' aging and the broadcast image. The context of those questions changes when one considers the off-camera work of that reporter, her contribution to the newsroom workplace and the news product. Literature shows that women reporters believe that women, of whatever age, bring a distinct viewpoint and a voice to news decisions. Furthermore, longevity in the business can translate to increased power in the newsroom.

David Weaver noted in 1997 that men were more likely to control radio and television newsrooms, but that difference is not so clear in the print media. He wrote:

> …as women become more numerous in various news media, they also gain more authority as managers. This is likely to be true especially of weekly newspapers and news magazines, where women are approaching parity with men in numbers. In these news media, especially, women seem to be in positions to influence news coverage.[30]

It is possible that greater longevity for women in broadcast could result in greater power in the broadcast newsroom as well.

Although there may be fewer women managers in the electronic media than in the print media, there are some women managers in broadcast news. In a study of 14 women in broadcast management, Patricia Phalen found that ethical-philosophical concerns were frequently mentioned by female news managers as a general characteristic of the broadcast culture. One woman news director discussed the media company's responsibility to "listen to all views in the community," and called diversity at the senior management table, "an important measure of how well these views were represented."[31]

Women broadcast news reporters, at the production table talking about what will be covered that day, believe the presence of women makes a difference. ABC's Cokie Roberts put it this way,

> It's not just age and race and sex and religion; it's point of view and interest…because on the slow days, the stories that you're going to pitch are the stories that interest you. And so it is terribly important to have people who have all kinds of interests sitting around that table when those stories get considered. And I'm awfully glad more of them are in skirts.[32]

Kay Mills says women have made a difference---not so much in *how* news is covered but *what* events and stories get covered---and the number involved in the process is crucial:

> It was not until there was a critical mass in the newsroom—and until more and more women were in the work force, seeking child care, speaking out about harassment, running for office—that women were able to make their

> different voice heard. "You have to have the 'rule of three' functioning before there will consistently be impact" said Glenda Holste, editorial writer and columnist for the St. Paul, Minn., *Pioneer Press*. "If there is just one woman in a story conference or editorial page meeting, you have to blend in. if there are two, you compete for attention. When there are three women, you reach a critical mass."[33]

Journalists believe that *who* is in the newsroom makes a difference in *what* gets covered and that this ultimately impacts cultural values. Some scholars and television critics seem to be not so sure. Weaver said many women journalism managers hold the same news values as the men, so, "a larger representation of women in journalism will not automatically result in changes in news coverage of politics or other subjects unless the culture of newsrooms, the structure of news work, and the traditions of journalism change."[34] However, while journalistic values guide the mechanics of newsgathering, gender may be more important regarding which stories get covered. Women's life concerns drive a different type of coverage, Mills noted.[35]

Some see much broader forces at work in television news than journalistic values and female influence on news decisions. In this view, television in general and news specifically is hierarchical and male. Angela Coyle, who analyzed the organization of work in British television, argues that,

> …the organization form and culture of television production not only excludes women, but reinforces the male experience and helps reproduce it…masculinity itself remains an essential qualification and quality required for the occupancy of many key positions within the occupational structure and hierarchy.[36]

That is, the experiences and needs of men drive the processes of television production while women must adapt to those processes---and, in doing so, women lose their uniqueness as women.

Theoretical Context

What difference does the presence or absence of aging women and their images in television news make? Media researcher George Gerbner said, "to be absent from television is to have less power in society."[37] "Symbolic annihilation" means that if one does not exist on the television screen, one is not reflected in the dominant means of cultural transmission in society and is rendered powerless.

According to the theory of social construction of reality, media institutions shape people's perceptions. Robert Park wrote in "The Natural History of the Newspaper" that newspapers (media) tell us about ourselves and our culture, for example. He wrote,

> It is possible…to select certain particularly picturesque or romantic incidents and treat them symbolically, for their human interest rather than their individual and personal significance. In this way news ceases to be wholly personal and assumes the form of art. It ceases to be the record of the doings of individual men and women and becomes and impersonal account of manners and life.[38]

Similarly, if images of older women are not seen on the television screen, the women themselves may not be accepted or included as part of the larger reality---unless, of course, they make themselves look like younger versions of themselves.

Feminists Lana Rakow and Kimberlie Kranich, who studied network newscasts, concluded that women appear in television news as a "sign" whether they are newscasters, newsmakers or sources. They represent ritualized female roles seen only as they relate to the predominant male culture. Rakow and Kranich write:

> …any improvements in women's treatment in the news will require not simply more coverage of women or more women journalists, but a fundamental change in news as a narrative genre…The solution to this problem of woman as sign in television news must be a radical one, the problem may even be impossible to solve.[39]

As stated earlier, the research here is exploratory, designed to look at local television news women reporters to see what images are there and then ask women who have lived the on-camera aging process what their experiences have been. Reporters were chosen because there is less research currently devoted to them and there are more women reporters than anchors at a given TV station. The research reported here focused on women reporters' images in local television news by reviewing tapes from the period when the first wave of television news women aged into their 30s (the mid 1980s) and the tapes of women currently on the air. Older and former women news reporters were asked about how they experienced aging in their careers. Anchors (about whom a significant amount of research exists) are mentioned here in literature review, but the appearance of women news reporters is the subject. Age-related and style-related images were emphasized.

METHOD

Specific research questions were: **What are the images of women reporters on local TV news? Do older women reporters appear on local TV news? What experiences do women reporters relate about aging on-camera on local television news?** Two methods used to gather data were simple observation of women reporters and open-ended surveys.

Images of women reporters were studied by looking for style-related and age-related issues in a review of videotapes to discover whether the images have changed over time, and, if so, how. Older women reporters were asked about their perceptions of age issues related to their on-camera work in television news. Open-ended questions were designed to gather data about on and off-camera work experiences, attitudes and predictions on aging women in television news.

To identify style-related and age-related images in the faces of television news reporters from the mid-1980s to 2000, the available on-camera images of women reporters delivering news at one Minneapolis/St. Paul station (14th market rank) were studied. In November 1986 (the oldest tapes available) eight women reporters appeared on newscasts; in November 2000 tapes were available for six women reporters. (Tapes were procured from the archives at one television station in the market. These were the oldest archives available.[40]) All women reporters who were taped on camera during the first two weeks of November 1986 and during the first two weeks of November 2000 were studied. November was chosen because it is a ratings period when typically the "strongest stories" are aired. Because reporters are typically not allowed to take vacations during November, all women reporters could be expected to appear on the air during the selected period.

Women reporters were observed in "stand-ups" during reporter "packages" and, in a few instances, "cut-aways" (shots of the reporter edited into a taped piece). The style-related images noted were: hair-style and color, weight, fashion, stand-up style. The age-related images noted were: presence of wrinkles, hair color and style and approximate age. The approximate age of the reporters in tapes from both periods was arrived at by observation and by questioning co-workers at the station. Observations of hair color were deemed an appropriate age determinant because according to medical experts, "[I]n half of all Caucasoid people, half the hairs on the scalp are gray by the age of 50."[41] Observations of wrinkles were deemed an appropriate age determinant because medical experts cite that by the age of 45, approximately a quarter of all women have significant wrinkling[42] and, in general, lines and wrinkles begin to appear as people move into their 40s.[43] Other impressions regarding appearance were recorded, such as obvious make-up, lighting, camera angles and unusual conditions regarding stand-ups.

Six veteran women reporters (the same women whose 1986 images had been reviewed) then answered an in-depth open-ended survey questionnaire about their experiences related to aging. A seventh older female reporter then working on the air at a different station answered the survey questions in a phone interview. The seven respondents range in age from 43 to 65. Two over-40 women reporters were working on the air at the time of the study (May 2002). Incidentally, in Minneapolis/St. Paul at the time of the survey there were a total of four 40+ women reporters on the air. The other five survey respondents had left the daily TV news business.

The respondents were asked about pressures they have felt to change or not change their appearance with regard to age; what they have been told by the audience, by management, by consultants; what pressures they feel from society; and how they have responded, or not, to those pressures. Finally, the women were asked about their attitudes on aging women and TV news and what they predict or desire for the future.[44]. (A copy of the questionnaire is Appendix A.)

RESULTS: OBSERVATION

There were eight women reporters in 1986; by observation and then questions of co-workers, their age was approximately thirty years old; five (more than half) appeared to have natural hair color with no obvious dyes or highlights, and one reporter actually showed gray hair; the reporters dressed in colorful clothing with bright, big patterns and styles. Stand-ups were often shot outdoors, with only natural lighting. Table 1 shows results.

TABLE 1	**NOVEMBER 1986 IMAGES** **8 Women Reporters**
CATEGORY	**FINDINGS**
	Age-Related Images
Age	The reporters ranged in age from 25 to 35, with most in their early 30s (ages confirmed by co-workers)
Wrinkles	6 reporters showed no signs of wrinkles 2 showed signs of wrinkles: one had wrinkles around the mouth, another had wrinkles on the forehead
Hair	4 reporters appeared to have natural hair color 3 reporters had hair with obvious blond highlights, called "frosted" in the 80s 1 reporter had some gray hair
Other Noticeable Images	Of note: One reporter was pregnant and chose to frame her stand-up from a low angle on a wide shot, which accentuated her size in pregnancy.
	Style-Related Images
Hair	2 reporters had short hair, curled or styled in a conservative cut-both of them were blonde and appeared to have "frosted" highlights 1 reporter had "messy hair"--blond, simple cut-pageboy style with bangs, uncombed 2 reporters had big long hair, highly styled with lots of height, shoulder length in the "Big Hair" style of the 80s 1 reporter had dark hair, cut straight at the chin with bangs, no styling or curl 1 reporter had a short wedge cut, lots of thick hair and, notably, a few gray hairs among dark black hair
Weight	7 reporters were thin, 1 reporter was very pregnant
Fashion	In general, these reporters wore very bright colors: red, bright blue, pink, yellow, including a variety of patterned shirts: plaids, paisleys, and a variety of types of clothes: dresses, sweaters, turtlenecks Overall, the reporters wore minimal make-up (lipstick evident, minimal eye color) and only one (an anchor who was doing a field piece) had noticeable make-up –obvious eye shadow
Stand Up	Most stand-ups were medium shots, showing the reporters from waist up; most reporters were not moving in the stand-up. Only one reporter used an extreme close-up of herself in a cutaway. Many stand-ups were videotaped outdoors, with a few videotaped during a snowfall.

In the first two weeks of November 2000, images of six women reporters at the station were available. One reporter tape contained no stand-ups. Reporters in 2000 and today do many more live reports with package inserts (where there is no stand-up) than did reporters in 1986. In general, the reporters from 2000 appeared to be slightly younger than the group from 1986 (their ages confirmed by questioning newsroom staff); their hair was short with about half showing obvious highlights; the dress was nearly identical for all reporters (conservative suit with solid color blouse); and the lighting of these stand-ups was much more controlled and flattering. Table 2 shows results.

TABLE 2	**NOVEMBER 2000 IMAGES** **6 Women Reporters**
CATEGORY	**FINDINGS**
	Age Related Images
Age	The reporters range in age from 25 to33 (observed and then confirmed by questioning co-workers)
Wrinkles	4 reporters had no wrinkles, 2 reporters showed some wrinkles, both on the forehead
Hair	3 reporters appeared to have natural hair color (no obvious dyes or highlights) 3 reporters appeared to have colored hair with obvious highlights
Other Noticeable Images	In their stand-ups, 3 of the reporters appeared to be lit very gently and looked extremely beautiful, practically glamorous 1 reporter did an exterior stand-up on a spot news story and had hair blowing in the wind
	Style-Related Images
Hair	All 6 reporters had short hair, none longer than chin length, none had curly hair—all had straight styles and looked very professional, business-like, conservative 4 of the reporters had a puffy bob-style hair cut 1 reporter had a looser, natural style page boy with bangs; in an exterior stand-up, this reporter's hair was very messy, blown by the wind 1 reporter had chin length straight hair, worn pulled back behind the ears
Weight	5 reporters were thin or of average weight. 1 reporter was quite pregnant
Fashion	In exterior stand-ups the reporters wore parka-style jackets with

	station logos Except for the parkas, all other stand-ups, whether exterior or interior, showed the reporters in conservative, usually dark-colored business suits with a skirt or pants, and a bright, solid color blouse with a v-notched neck. Their clothing was very much the same.
Stand-up	There was a greater variety in the type of stand-ups used by these women reporters. Unless in the studio, the women typically used some type of movement in their stand-ups, such as walking from one point to another or standing up from a crouching position. The stand-ups usually concluded in a medium wide shot, waist up. There were no extreme close-ups as cutaways.

The only gray hair in either 1986 or 2000 was premature, belonging to a woman who appeared to be in her late 20s, extremely fit with creamy young looking skin. In a personal interview she later confirmed her age at the time as 28. Aside from very moderate wrinkling in only two women in each time period, no other images of age were found. In fact, on-camera reporters in 2000 were younger than their predecessors and, with more make-up and more attention to lighting, appeared even more attractive. Professional make-up artist Liz Zilka, who has done make-up for the past 12 years in film, network television and local television, says she believes make-up for reporters is moving away from what she calls a "credible" look to a "glamorous" one. She says that cable television news is leading the way:

> "Turn on FOX and look at those young reporters and what do you see. You see lip gloss and then you see eye shadow. You see the make-up first, the person second. The way I've always done it is to make people up for credibility. You shouldn't be seeing the make-up, even though it's there. You should see the person first.[45]

Zilka says she believes the reason for the more glamorous look reflects an attempt by stations to attract younger demographics and the stations believe glamorous reporters do so.

RESULTS: QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONSES

Among the seven women who responded to a questionnaire about their long careers in television news, the experiences span two decades and involve a variety of stations in large and small markets. The women were guaranteed anonymity in their responses. The age range of the respondents was 43 to 65. The median age was 50. The years worked in TV news was: 6, 11, 12, 15, 18, 25 (2) years (average 16). The year each respondent started in TV news was 1972, 1976, 1977 (3), 1979, 1981. Two reporters were working on the air in November 2002. The other five had left the daily TV news business in 1981, 1984, 1989, 1990, and 1992.

Experiences Regarding Style-Related Issues

All reporters but one said they felt pressures related to beauty during their work in television news. Those pressures came from management, consultants, and viewers.

Comments Reported from Management

Six of seven respondents cited management as applying pressure in various ways, including telling women to wear more make-up, brighter colors, and particularly, to change hair-styles. Some specific examples follow.

> I remember when I took a new job being told by the news director, "You're obviously smart and I'd like to offer you the job, but you can clearly do a better job with your hair." Also I remember being told directly not to wear hats when it is cold outside.
>
> I was told by my first assistant news director and assignment editor that he wouldn't have hired me because I have "a funny mouth" (lopsided smile caused by a split-lip childhood injury that I worked hard to correct after that).
>
> Probably the most blatant comment I ever got happened when I was very new to commercial television. I was 22 or 23 working as a weekend producer and reporter in Ohio...I was interested in pursuing reporting. The new news director said to me, "I think you'd better face it that you're just not pretty enough to be on television." At that age and at that point in my career, I found this comment to be devastating. What's wild is—I've never been more attractive. I think he used a

> young woman's natural anxiety about being pretty enough to try to bully her into doing what he wanted. Ugh.
>
> Hair was a very big thing in the newsroom. Every haircut was discussed, publicly; in front of the newsroom with management giving it a thumbs up or thumbs down. Actually, I think that's true throughout the industry. I believe I may have lost a network news job because the recruiter thought I had "weird" hair (even though I was using the in-house stylist at the station).

Comments Reported from Consultants

Three of seven respondents said consultants did not comment about appearance, but the other four reported many style-related suggestions and comments. Some consultants' actions were seen as helpful, such as taking reporters shopping for clothing, teaching make-up techniques, helping with hair cuts. Others were seen as intrusive. Examples follow:

> A consultant hired by Station XXXX tried to get me to pitch certain earrings she thought were too big. I told her if she wanted to be helpful to get lost.
>
> Consultants always had a lot to say. First, in Fargo, I looked and sounded too young. They recommended a different hair-style. In the Twin Cities, it was hair, make-up and my all time favorite, height. One consultant reviewed a story in which I interviewed the [then current] Governor, a man who was well over six feet in height. I'm 5'2" on a good day. The disparity in height that was evident when both of us were pictured on a camera bothered the consultant who suggested I carry around with me a cardboard box that I could stand on prior to interviewing tall people.

Comments Reported from the Audience

Two of the seven respondents reported no comments from the audience regarding their appearance. The other five recalled many instances of viewers calling the station about the reporter's looks. While a few comments were positive, most of the respondents gave examples of audience criticism of appearance. Examples follow.

> In Fargo, I remember a viewer saying, "I must have a really bad set. You look much better in person." I always found it disconcerting that viewers I met in

> person seemed to remember more about what I'd been wearing in news stories than what I'd said.
>
> There were many comments. I remember starting out as a producer when some guys called in from a bar wondering "if the anchor lady was wearing knickers or had her pants tucked into her boots" – not a thought about whether I had the correct lead with national news that evening.
>
> I have had numerous, anonymous voicemail calls about the way I look…people who criticize me for the way my hair, makeup, body or clothing look. A typical cal would say…"of course, you're so stupid you don't even know how to…do you hair/put on lipstick/choose a decent dress," etc. etc.

All but one respondent reported receiving comments and suggestions for changing their appearance to look better on camera. While some comments were hurtful, the women said they generally appreciated sensitive suggestions that would improve their on-camera appearance.

Experiences Regarding Age-Related Issues

None of the respondents cited specific comments from news management or consultants regarding their age, but most said that age is or was an issue in their work. One respondent reported very pointed comments on age coming from viewers. It is interesting to note that that respondent could be considered the most prominent media presence in the respondent group because she was on the air in the market studied for 18 years, was one of the first women reporters in the market, and went on to anchor and report at another local station.

Overall, five of the seven respondents reported that age is or was an issue in their work, affecting decisions on their appearance and their careers.

Age and Appearance Issues

As stated above, no respondent reported direct comments or suggestions from television news management or consultants regarding aging issues. However, all participants surveyed reported that they have responded to general social and cultural expectations on aging regarding appearance or career issues. Aging has caused each to change her appearance. For example, six of the seven respondents color their hair and have no intention of letting their hair go gray. The seventh respondent has no gray hair but would consider coloring if it began to gray. One reporter said:

> My hair began to gray when I was 21 years old. I could have chosen to let it go silver, which it probably is now. I never felt the "silver" hair was my natural hair. I want to look like the 'me' I carry in my mind's eye when I look in the mirror. That is not a white or gray-haired person, but a blonde of sorts.

Most of the respondents exercise for health and appearance purposes. Two said they would consider cosmetic surgery in the future.

Age and Work Issues

Two of the seven respondents expressed no opinions on aging and their work as TV news reporters. The other five reported that aging either convinced them that it was time to leave the business or that their careers were or could be limited by their age. Two women said age was a determining factor in their leaving the TV news business.

> Part of the reason I decided to move on to another career is because I didn't feel confident that I could remain on the air as I aged because I am female. There is absolutely no question that males are allowed to age "gracefully" i.e. Walter Cronkite, Dave Moore, while there are very few females to point to. Certainly Barbara Walters is one.
>
> Surveys revealed audiences like me, trusted me because I wasn't a "baby" and liked my looks (classy was the most recorded comment. Ha!!) But the moment I began looking my age---or at least looking more like 40 than 30, all callers referred to both gender and age in any comment on my performance. They knew! I knew! My bosses knew! When I was forced out at Station XXXX, the call sheets were loaded. I loved my work. I thought little of aging but was reminded often enough in sly ways that I should think more about it. I think women should follow their own instincts. I found a perfect time and age to leave and had another career. I wish all the cute young things well. May they have the sense to know when it's time to call it a day---and when they are no longer either cute or young.

Two respondents commented on the type of story that older women in television news are allowed to cover. One said management was reluctant to let her cover spot news.

> By the time I joined Station XXXX at nearly 50, I was treated as an icon. I wanted to work hard; they wanted to treat me to pasture time (work on deep pieces, etc) so I rarely got to go to fires or shootings. Too bad, too, 'cause I really like those stories.

The second reporter to comment on types of stories is still on the air, and says she avoids discussing her age with co-workers because she does not want them to change their attitude about her capacity to cover spot news.

> …they'd perceive me differently. I hope to be more open about it later. People think I'm younger. If they knew, they'd react differently. I've never been a splashy reporter, then or now. I got where I did because I find good stories. I can imagine myself 20 years from now doing the fire.

Two other respondents said that they believe career limitations arise as a woman reporter ages in local television news.

> Most of the younger female reporters hired when I was in the business, and I believe it is true today as well, are hired with an eye toward having them anchor. The older women reporters were regarded as "workhorses." Keep cranking out a package a day, but were not considered candidates to anchor or manage or "move up" in any way in the newsroom.
>
> I think that women of a certain age are no longer shown the door; however, I do think that few women over 40, perhaps even 35, are promoted, given better jobs, more high profile assignments etc. My advice to a woman entering this field would be to work like a dog in your 20s and early 30s to get where you want to be…because wherever you are by your mid to late 30s is where you're likely to stay. In addition, because of the precedent of lawsuits when companies have discharged women because of their age, I feel somewhat protected. That said, it does not mean I have any options. What I mean is—my company might be afraid to fire me, but that doesn't mean that another station would want to hire me. And if you can't be fired or hired—you're stuck. When your employer knows that no one else wants you, they can offer you lousy raises and know that you'll shut up and take them. Women at mid life in broadcasting are not in a position to drive a hard bargain.

SUMMARY

To summarize, a review of the images of women reporters at one local station in 1986 and 2000 showed one image of gray hair but on an obviously young woman. Otherwise, no images of older women were seen. Emphasis on perfectly styled hair and beauty, particularly in the lighting effects, was observed in the more recent tapes. The surveys suggest that women television news reporters can and do age in the business, but they must maintain an "acceptable" on-camera image that does not include gray hair. It also appears they must adapt career expectations to organizational and perhaps cultural expectations of what type of reporting an older woman may do. This research showed no images of elder woman reporters in local television news in this market. Granted, two respondents surveyed are older (40+) and currently on the air, but both take steps to protect their on-camera appearance, and one does not discuss her age at work lest it may change the way she is treated. Finally, two women left television news based in part or in full on their perceptions that their age was a liability, if age was not, in fact, the specific reason for leaving the business.

Attitudes Regarding the Future

The respondents disagreed as to whether older women would be better accepted in future TV news. Two respondents said, if anything, the culture of television was becoming more skewed toward youth.

> I'd like to believe that as the baby boom generation ages, we will become more comfortable with older looking people, and seeing people like ourselves on television. On the other hand, there seems to be no sign of that right now. On the plethora of cable news stations I'm seeing generally young, beautiful people, with a few middle career folks. It sounds bizarre, but in a cosmetic business, I doubt we will come to the time when a gray-haired, matronly looking grandmother type delivers the 5 PM news.

> Women judge women by their looks. Men judge women by their looks. The pressure on women is constant. Men can age. Women can't. That's life. There are a few exceptions, but until I see a Madeline Albright-type sitting at the anchor desk, I won't believe the exceptions will become the rule. If anything, the network and local reporters are becoming prettier.

The other respondents were hopeful about acceptance of older women and cited signs of that in television news today.

> I come from Washington, DC where anchors are older. I think the pressure is going to be more to do well. Looks are a factor, but content will be more important.
>
> I am seeing more and more older faces and I am very pleased.
>
> I do think women who age gracefully will be accepted—they won't all have to look as beautiful as Diane Sawyer. I think we will accept a few wrinkles.
>
> I think it's up to the younger women today who will eventually be the "older" females in the business. I think they can change it, if they can change their own attitudes.
>
> As baby boomers age, we have the opportunity to change perception and I do think that has happened somewhat. It would be my hope that women will be able to stay on TV for as long as they want to…that a pleasantly attractive, well-groomed woman will be allowed to continue to do her work regardless of her age.

DISCUSSION

A comparison of the two sets of images from 1986 and 2000 shows some differences. The reporters from 1986 wore more colorful and individually distinctive clothing and expressed more individuality through difference in hair styles than the women of 2000. Reporters in both eras were able to work during pregnancy, and images of pregnant women appeared on the air. In 1986 one reporter had a small amount of gray hair but in 2000 there were no images related to an older woman. Overall, the reporters appear younger and more glamorous, possibly even prettier, in 2000 than in 1986.

From this very limited sample, it appears that older women work in TV news, but the images of older women are not present. It appears women can and do grow older in local television news, but not without struggle, and not in great numbers. No reporter surveyed noted any direct comments on age and appearance from management, but perhaps management doesn't **have** to say anything. Women reporters may know they must look young and try to look younger on their own (all interviewed color their hair). General social pressures, noted by all but one reporter, motivated the older women reporters to "take care of themselves," which meant looking younger.

IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE STUDIES

More women reporters need to be studied. While the number of older women reporters on the air is not great, the number of reporters who grew older in the business and have now gone on to other careers is large, and those women can provide insight about this issue. The younger current women television news reporters and their attitudes on appearance and aging should also be studied.

Although men were not the subject of this study, data shows more men are coloring their hair to cover gray. One woman reporter interviewed said a male anchor in her market absent supposedly for orthopedic surgery, returned to work having obviously had a face-lift. Men also feel appearance pressures in television news and study of male reporters and their experiences related to aging and appearance is needed.

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[1]. Joan Jacobs Brumberg and Jacquelyn Jackson, "What gives women a skin-deep approach to self worth?,"*StarTribune*, (Minneapolis/St. Paul), 26 February 2002, A11.
[2] Gaye Tuchman, "Introduction: The Symbolic Annihilation of Women by the Mass Media," *Hearth and Home: Images of Women in the Mass Media*, Gaye Tuchman, Arlene Kaplan Daniels, and James Benet, eds. (New York: Oxford, 1978) 30.
[3] James W. Carey, *Communication as Culture: Essays on Media and Society*, (1992; reprint ed., New York, London: Routledge, 1988) 21.
[4] Marion Marzolf, *Up From the Footnote*, (New York: Hastings House Publishers) 1977, 157-168

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[5] Erika Engstrom & Anthony J. Ferri, "Looking Through a Gendered Lens: Local U.S. Television News Anchor's Perceived Career Barriers," *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media* 44 (2000): 614-635.
[6] Marzolf, 178.
[7] Engstrom, 614.
[8] Sue A. Lafky, "The Progress of Women and People of Color in the U.S. Journalistic Workforce: A Long, Slow Journey," in *Women in Mass Communication*, ed. Pamela Creedon (Newbury Park, CA: Sage, 1989), 91.
[9] Matzolf, 168.
[10] Erika Engstrom & Anthony J. Ferri, "From Barriers to Challenges: Career Perceptions of Women TV News Anchors," *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly* 75 (1998): 789.
[11] Engstrom, 2000, p. 657
[12] Ibid.
[13] "She challenged television's beauty myth," *People Weekly*, 7 March 1994, 177.
[14] Ibid.
[15] Patti Buchman, "Title VII limits on discrimination against television anchorwomen on the basis of age-related appearance," *Columbia Law Review* 85 (1985): 215.
[16] Coppola (repeat)
[17] Vincent Coppola, "The Accidental Icon," *MEDIAWEEK*, 19 April 1999, 51.
[18] Karissa S. Wang, "Local news veterans keep viewers tuned in" *Electronic Media*, April 8, 2002, 12.
[19] Jim Calio, "ABC gets big splash from its gorgeous new anchor at the Los Angeles games," *People Weekly*, 20 August 1984, 126.
[20] Susan Schnidehette, "Two stars vanish in a blink of the CBS eye," *People Weekly*, 26 February 1994, 31.
[21] Shelley Levitt, "Sullivan's Travels," *People Weekly*, 14 February 1994, 40.
[22] Levitt, p. 41.
[23] Jill Smolowe, "Nipped, Tucked And Talking: Greta Van Susteren debuts a bold look on her new show—and breaks a TV news taboo by spilling the beans on her cosmetic surgery," *People Weekly*, 18 Feb 2002, 47.
[24] Ibid.
[25] Ibid.
[26] Ibid.
[27] *USA Today*, 14 February 2002, p. 16A.
[28] Is there a credibility advantage to looking younger? Sheila Brownlow studied the effects of baby versus mature looking faces in regard to producing attitude change. The study attempted to discern whether one face would be more effective than another. Brownlow notes that previous studies that show that physically attractive people are more persuasive than physically unattractive people. Brownlow's study used only female speakers. The study tried to isolate and minimize the effects of attractiveness and age, then Brownlow concludes that ,

> ..facial appearance interacts with manipulations of speaker credibility in determining attitude change…babyfaced speakers produced more agreement with their position when trustworthiness was impugned than did maturefaced speakers whose trustworthiness was impugned, whereas maturefaced speakers whose expertise was questioned were more likely to produce attitude change than babyfaced speakers whose expertise was questioned.

In this study, when questions of trustworthiness were raised, a babyfaced speaker produced greater attitude change. When questions of expertise were raised, a maturefaced speaker produced more attitude change. While the author of this study warns against generalizing its results, it is amusing to apply her findings to television news. TV news on-air personnel are in general attractive, so whether they are babyfaced or maturefaced, both types of faces will contribute to credibility----the babyface negates questions of trustworthiness, the matureface negates questions of expertise. A woman with a babyface or a matureface, regardless of age, has something to offer that produces attitude change, perhaps even believability. Sheila Brownlow, "Seeing is Believing: Facial Appearance, Credibility, and Attitude Change," *Journal of Nonverbal Behavior* 16 (1992): 101-114.
[29] *USA Today*, 14 February 2002, p. 16A.
[30] David Weaver, "Women as Journalists," in *Women, Media, and Politics*, ed. Pippa Norris (New York , Oxford: Oxford University Press) 1997, 28.

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[31] Patricia F. Phalen, "Pioneers, Girlfriends and Wives," *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media* 44 (2000): 235.

[32] "Cokie Roberts, On Those Who Raise Key national Issues," *Media Report To Women*, Summer 1996, 7.

[33] Kay Mills, "What Difference Do Women Journalists Make?", in Norris, 45.

[34] Weaver in Norris, 38.

[35] Mills, p. 45.

[36] Angela Coyle, "Behind the Scenes: Women in Television," in *Women and Work; Positive Action for Change*, ed. A. Coyle and J. Skinner, (New York: New York University Press) 1988, 59.

[37] George Gerbner, "The Electronic Storyteller: Television and the Culturation of Values," Introduced by Prof. Michael Morgan, Univ. of Massachusetts-Amherst, Video; color; 32 minutes. Northampton, MA: Media Education Foundation, 1997.

[38] Park, Robert, "The Natural History of the Newspaper," *The American Journal of Sociology*, November 1923, 277.

[39] Lana F. Rakow and Kimberlie Kranich, "Woman as Sign in Television News", *Journal of Communication* 41 (1991): 9, 22.

[40] The station studied has donated its older tapes and film to the state historical society. Unfortunately, the Historical Society is not allowing the public to search the pre-1986 collections (pre-beta tape) until the year 2010. Currently, only the station librarian can search for older videotape. Additionally, the Historical Society is requiring any film requests to be made by specific date and event at a cost of $25 per search and the public is not allowed to personally view the film—only staff is allowed to look at the film. Under these restrictions, the only personal review of the tapes that could be made had to occur at the station and with the resources available at the station. Hence, research begins with the review of the stations' oldest beta collection which begins in 1986.

[41] Dr. John Gray, *The World of Hair*, www.pg.com, http://www.pg.com/science/haircare/hair_twh_61.htm.

[42] Andrew Lockman, "Skin Changes in Maturing Women," *Clinic and Family Practice* 4 (March, 2002) no. 1.

[43] Susan Feyder, "Not just skin deep," StarTribune, (Minneapolis/St. Paul), 22 June 2003, p. D4.

[44] The women were told that this graduate study could eventually become a published paper and were guaranteed anonymity if they requested it.

[4545] Interview with Liz Zilka, April 30, 2002.

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The World of Hair, http://www.pg.com/science/haircare/hair_twh_61.htm.

APPENDIX A

Aging Women and TV News: RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE

I. BASIC DATA

Name: If you would prefer to remain anonymous, please note that)
Age:
Years worked in TV News:
Positions held:
Age and year when started in TV news:
If you are no longer working in TV news, age when you got out of the business.

II. PERCEPTIONS

Have you felt pressures to change your appearance regarding beauty-related images? Please explain with examples.
Have your felt pressures to change your appearance regarding age-related images? Please explain with examples
Have you felt pressure from American society regarding age and beauty? Please explain.

III. CONCRETE EXAMPLES

What has the audience told you about age? About appearance? What comments, if any, from viewers have been recorded or passed on about appearance?
What has management told you about age? About appearance? Have any age-related appearance issues been raised?
What have consultants told you about age? About appearance? Have any age-related appearance issues been raised?

IV. RESPONSE

Have you responded to pressures regarding age-related appearance? How? When? What exactly have you done? For example, color hair, surgery, exercise.
Is you hair gray or would you ever let your hair go gray?
What steps would you be willing or unwilling to take regarding beauty and appearance in the future? Why?

V. COMPETITION

Who do you see as your primary competition in your job?
Women of peer age?
Men of peer age?
Younger women?
Older women?
Younger men?
Older men?
Do you believe that management treats younger female reporters differently from older female reporters?

VI. NEWS VALUES AND THE JOB

How has your news judgment evolved over your career?
How has your career evolved over time?

VII. THE FUTURE

What do you predict for the future of women in broadcasting? Will there be more pressure regarding age and looks? Why?
Will there be less pressure? Why?
What is your general attitude and approach to growing older on TV in the news business?
Any parting thoughts?

Abstract - COVERAGE OF FEMALE ATHLETES IN WOMEN'S SPORTS MAGAZINES: A CONTENT ANALYSIS - Susan Francis

The purpose of this thesis was to examine women's sports magazines to see how female athletes would be portrayed. Historically, female athletes have been under-represented in the media and have been portrayed in traditional feminine roles. A content analysis was conducted examining the three women's sports magazines, *Conde Nast Women's Sports & Fitness, Sports Illustrated for Women* and *Real Sports*. The results of this study demonstrates that significant improvement in women's sports coverage is still needed.

Status of
Women

COVERAGE OF FEMALE ATHLETES IN WOMEN'S SPORTS MAGAZINES: A CONTENT ANALYSIS

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COVERAGE OF FEMALE ATHLETES IN WOMEN'S SPORTS MAGAZINES: A CONTENT ANALYSIS

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Although women and girls are participating in all levels of sports in unprecedented numbers, the images these same women are exposed to through the media are typically not celebrating the female athlete, for her strength, quickness or stamina, according to some studies.[1] Mary Jo Kane, director of the Tucker Center for Research on Girls and Women in Sports, summarized that female athletes tend to be portrayed in one of three ways.[2] First, they are separated from that of male athletes and described in terms that make their athletic abilities different from male athletes. As a result, male sports are the "norm." Second, female athletes are portrayed in very sexual, feminine ways that reassure us that even though they may be athletes, they retain the most important qualities of being feminine women. Third, and related to the sexual portrayal, is to portray female athletes in domestic roles, such as mother, dutiful wife, etc., to reinforce that the female athletes have not forgotten their most important roles in life or they are portrayed as victims.

The media often distinguish between female athletes and male athletes by defining them in terms of masculinity and femininity. The traits defined as masculine are accepted as the standards for athleticism against which all athletes are judged against, male or female. Given this threshold, female athletes are not only seen as "other than," they become "less than" male athletes. Media critics, including Mary Jo Kane and Janet Parks, in *The Social Construction of Gender Difference and Hierarchy in Sport Journalism - Few New Twists on Very Old Themes,* have argued that overemphasizing a female athlete's feminine traits reinforces her otherness. Trivializing her athletic abilities because she can not compare to male athletic abilities keeps the female athlete in a secondary position.[3]

The portrayal of female athletes in sexy, feminine poses is pervasive in the media. Donna Lopiano, executive director of the Women's Sports Foundation, discussed when nudity is used as a celebration of a strong women's athletic body and abilities and when it is used in an inappropriate, gratuitous way.

According to Lopiano, when photographs feature female athletes in strong, athletic positions or when the photographs emphasize a competitive psychological attitude, instead of focusing on sensuality, these photographs are seeking to "uplift" female athletes. More often than not, the public does not see these kinds of images. Instead, the viewer sees pictures of female athletes in various stages of undress being photographed in non-sport settings which focus exclusively on their body and not their athletic abilities. In general, male athletes are not asked to pose for these type of pictures; instead their skill and muscles are highlighted and they are in athletic gear and in real sport settings. Due to this focus on sexuality, we often see female athletes being celebrated for their feminine assets, and not their physical assets, Lopiano said.[4]

Female athletes are also defined in terms of domestic roles and/or being victims. Coverage of female athletes tends to focus on their roles as wives or mothers. When Chris Evert retired after a successful tennis career, she was featured on the cover of *Sports Illustrated* with the following tagline, "I'm going to be a full time wife."[5]

Victim portrayal is also a common method used to portray female athletes. Tara VanDerveer, Stanford University's women's basketball coach, discussed *Sports Illustrated's* choices for its cover. She pointed out that between the 1993 *Sports Illustrated* swimsuit issue and the 1994 issue, only three female athletes were included on the cover of the magazine. All three of those issues focused on female athletes being victimized: Monica Seles who was stabbed; Mary Pierce whose father was abusive; and Nancy Kerrigan who was clubbed in the leg.[6]

Most media outlets have fallen short when it comes to giving adequate attention to female athletes. According to the *Modern History of Women in Sports*, men receive 90 percent of the coverage in the sports sections, women receive 5 percent, and horses and dogs get 3 percent. Women did not even surpass horse and dog coverage until 1992.[7]

According to Lopiano, the Women's Sports Foundation executive director, the most important goal for women's sports in the next ten years is to break through the "log-jam" of men's sports and to start getting substantial coverage in a good time slot on a regular basis. Lopiano notes that this is critical because it directly relates to the sports succeeding financially.[8]

Judith Greenberg, author of *Women & Sports - Getting Into the Game*, argued that the lack of women's sports coverage in the media is important because it reflects a much larger picture of women and their role in our society.

Greenberg writes, "The place of women in the sports world reflects their place in every other area of life; and the way women are regarded by their society is reflected in the acceptance of women as athletes throughout history."[9]

Three magazines were introduced to the general public in the late 1990's that highlighted and targeted female athletes. They were *Real Sports, Sports Illustrated for Women* and *Conde Nast Women's Sport & Fitness*. These were new kinds of magazines that had not been produced in the past. The question is will the magazines continue to reinforce the portrayals of female athletes as listed above, or will they take a different approach?

NOTES

[1] Studies include: Donna Lopiano, "Modern History of Women In Sports - Twenty-five Years of Title IX," *The Athletic Woman*, April 2000; Jan Graydon, "But it's more than a game. It's an institution. Feminist Perspectives on Sport," *Feminist Review,* 13(1983): 5-16; Marie-Luise Klein, "Women in the Discourse of Sport Reports," *International Review for Sociology of Sport,* 23(1988): 139-152; Michael Messner, "Sports and Male Domination: The Female Athlete as Contested Ideological Terrain," *Sociology of Sport Journal,* 5(1988): 197-211.

[2] Mary Jo Kane, "Media Coverage of the Post Title IX Female Athlete: A Feminist Analysis of Sport, Gender and Power," *Duke Journal of Gender Law & Policy,* Spring 1996.

[3] Mary Jo Kane and Janet Parks, "The Social Construction of Gender Difference and Hierarchy in Sport Journalism - Few New Twists on Very Old Themes," *Women in Sport and Physical Activity Journal*, Fall 1992: 50-51.

[4] Donna Lopiano, "Putting Female Athlete Nudity in Perspective," Submitted to *Sports Business Journal,* September 2000.

[5] Pamela Creedon, *Women, Media and Sport*. Thousand Oaks, London, New Delhi: SAGE Publications, 1994: 30.

[6] Jane Gottesman, "Coverage of Women in Sports: Q & A with Championship Basketball Coach Tara VanDerveer," *EXTRA!*, November/December, 1994.

[7] Donna Lopiano, "Modern History of Women In Sports - Twenty-five Years of Title IX," *The Athletic Woman*, April 2000.

[8] Donna Lopiano. Interview with Susan Francis, 18 December 2001..

[9] Judith Greenberg, *Women & Sports - Getting Into the Game*, New York: F. Watts,1997: 16.

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

While research on the three major women's sports magazines is limited, there is a substantial amount of data of women's sports coverage in other media outlets.

J. Renee Mackin did a content analysis of the three women's sports magazines *(Conde Nast Women's Sports & Fitness, Sports Illustrated for Women and Real Sports)* in 1999. She focused on advertisements, feature stories and the covers. Advertisements in *Conde Nast Women's Sports & Fitness* were primarily for sports apparel and beauty products; its feature articles were generally health oriented and the covers had a non-sport focus with casual clothing. Advertisements in *Sports Illustrated for Women* were mostly for sport events, sport apparel and sports products. Feature articles were primarily athlete oriented and the covers had the athletes posed but dressed in athletic clothing. *Real Sports* had advertisements mostly for sport events, its feature articles were mostly sport oriented and its covers had athletes dressed in athletic clothing and performing an athletic feat. Mackin summarized that the covers reflected the nature of the three magazines. According to Mackin, *Conde Nast Women's Sports & Fitness* focused on its casual fitness orientation, *Sports Illustrated for Women's* covers were consistent with its approach to catch a younger audience by focusing on the athlete's personality, and *Real Sports* targeted sports enthusiasts with action shots.[1]

L.A. Schell looked at the photographs and text in *Conde Nast Women's Sports & Fitness* between 1997 and 1999. She found that the magazine's cover and the photographs accompanying the articles tended to have white, thin models clothed in fitness clothes and with various body parts exposed including thighs, abdominals, cleavage and buttocks. The author argued that these kind of portrayals reinforce the idea that women's sports are not competitive and that only sex-appropriate sports should be covered.[2]

Mary Jo Kane and Janet Parks examined framing in the context of sports journalism and gender difference. They argued that the media overemphasize a female athlete's feminine side or trivialize her athletic abilities, and affect the public's attitude by its lack of coverage of women's sports.

Kane and Parks examined three *Sports Illustrated* feature articles covering three tennis tournaments. They found that when describing an athlete's successes, they were described in masculine traits, and when athlete's weaknesses were being discussed, they were described in traditional female traits. Descriptions of weakness were used more for women than men. Female athletes received an abundance of coverage focusing on their emotions, including crying. Female athletes were most often described in terms of their clothing choices. Female athletes were more often portrayed as their personal lives negatively impacting their sport. For example, poor play by female athletes might be attributed to such distractions as breaking up with a boyfriend, having a domineering parent, etc. The authors concluded that the media are creating gender differences that put female athletes at a disadvantage.[3]

Stanley Wearden and Pamela Creedon argued in 1999 that in sports, female athletes were represented as weaker than male athletes and that images of female athletes reinforced traditional images of femininity and gender roles. The authors examined the commercials aired during the WNBA's first season to see if the commercials upheld traditional feminine roles or reinforced the strong female images viewers were seeing during the WNBA games. They found that over half of the commercials portrayed women in traditionally sexist roles; that the majority of women in the commercials were conventionally beautiful models; and that young women were used much more often in commercials for all products. The authors argued that viewers were getting a mixed message regarding women's roles. The commercials seemed to indicate that it was okay for a woman to be strong in the context of sports, but that in the rest of her life, she must live within the traditional roles for women.[4]

Bonnie Hagerman examined coverage of women's sports in *Sports Illustrated* from 1954-2000. She found that the overwhelming theme of the magazine was to uphold the traditional roles for women by emphasizing a female athlete's femininity. Bil Gilbert and Nancy Williamson, *Sports Illustrated* writers, criticized their own magazine and other media outlets for focusing on a female athlete's looks or for portraying her in an unnatural way.

Gilbert and Williamson noted "the amount of coverage given to women's athletics is meager and the quality is atrocious. Rather than describing how well or badly the athlete performed or even how the contest turned out, writers tend to concentrate on the color of the hair and eyes, and the shape of the legs or the busts of the women. The best-looking girls (by male standards) are singled out for attention, no matter how little their sporting talent may be."[5]

One study by Angela Lumpkin and Linda Williams examined all feature articles in *Sports Illustrated* between 1954 and 1987 and found that 90.8 percent of the articles featured men, 91.8 percent of the articles were written by male authors, men's articles were on average ten column inches longer than women's articles, and for every one article that focused on women, nine articles focused on men. They also noted that women were described in "blatantly sexist terms." They found that females received the most coverage in "acceptable sports," including tennis, swimming, diving, cycling and track and field. The authors concluded that *Sports Illustrated* reinforces the traditional feminine roles by its choices in what female sports to cover and how the magazine focuses on the physical appearance of the female athletes instead of their physical abilities.[6]

Sports Illustrated is not the only media outlet that is not providing much coverage to women's sports. The same criticism leveled at *Sports Illustrated* for its lack of coverage, its emphasis on traditional feminine roles, and its overemphasis of acceptable female roles has been expressed about other media outlets as well. Nearly all media outlets have been criticized for not covering women's sports and for trivializing female athletes' accomplishments.

The *New York Times'* coverage of the 1995 women's and men's National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) basketball tournaments was examined by Lynn Silverstein. She discovered that the men's tournament had three times the coverage the women's tournament received. Silverstein found that the men's tournament was featured on the front page of the sports section thirty-one times, while the women's tournament only made the front page of the sports section four times. The author concluded that the *Times* inadequately covered women's sports and when they did cover them, the newspaper tended to uphold old stereotypes.[7]

The *New York Times* and *Indianapolis Star* were examined for their coverage of women's sports in 1989 and 1999 by Judith Jenkins George. In the *Times*, women received 2.2 percent of all sports coverage in 1989 and 6.7 percent in 1999. The *Star* had 2.7 percent in 1989 and 8.6 percent in 1999. Female athletes make up nearly 40 percent of all high school, college and Olympic athletes.[8]

Margaret Carlisle Duncan found that women's physical appearance is highlighted in sports photographs. The author found that those female athletes that most closely resemble the "ideal" femininity are photographed most frequently. Women are often photographed in sexy or tight clothing, as opposed to athletic uniforms. In addition, photographs also focused on certain body parts to play up female sexuality, or they pictured women in submissive positions. Methods to stress women's femininity included focusing on emotional displays, using camera angles that look up to men and down at women and using visual groups that stress action pictures of men and non-action pictures of women.[9]

Several studies have found that television coverage of women's sports is considerably less than men's coverage. Women are portrayed in stereotypical images and are often put in a secondary position to men. Studies have found that women's sports events receive less air time, have fewer cameras covering the event, are covered by second string broadcasters, are severely edited, and "condescending, trivializing comments" are used by the commentators.[10]

The Amateur Athletic Foundation of Los Angeles studied televised basketball games and tennis matches to compare how men and women athletes were covered. According to the authors of the study, the coverage presented female athletes as inferior. They found that commentators commonly referred to female athletes as girls, while never referring to male athletes as boys. Women were called by their first name 53 percent of the time, while men were called by their first name 8 percent of the time. The authors also documented that men and women were described in different terms. Men were four times more likely to be described in terms that relayed strength rather than weakness. Alternatively, women were more likely to be described in terms of weakness.

The authors also found that when a male athlete failed, commentators generally blamed the power, strength and intelligence of their opponent, not their individual shortcomings. When a female athlete failed, the commentators most often attributed it to the athlete lacking in stamina, aggression, or confidence.[11]

Mary Jo Kane, director of the Tucker Center for Research on Girls and Women in Sports, argued that a new stage is occurring in covering women's sports. While feminizing women athletes to keep them from threatening the status quo has been occurring for quite some time, according to Kane, a new emphasis on making female athletes not only feminine but overtly sexy is occurring.[12]

NOTES

[1] J. Renee Mackin, *Women's Sports Magazines.* Paper presented at the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication Southeast Regional Colloquium, North Carolina: Chapel Hill, 2000.

[2] L.A. Schell, *Socially Constructing the Female Athlete: A Monolithic Media Representation of Active Women.* Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Texas Woman's University, Denton, 1999.

[3] Mary Jo Kane and Janet Parks, "The Social Construction of Gender Difference and Hierarchy in Sport Journalism - Few New Twists on Very Old Themes," *Women in Sport and Physical Activity Journal,* 1(1992): 49-83.

[4] Stanley Wearden and Pamela Creedon, *"We Got Next": Images of Women in TV Commercials During the Inaugural WNBA Season.* Paper presented at the Commission on the Status of Women at the Annual Meeting of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, New Orleans: Louisiana, 1999.

[5] Bil Gilbert and Nancy Williamson, "Sports is Unfair to Women," *Sports Illustrated,* 28 May 1973: 88-89.

[6] Angela Lumpkin and Linda Williams, "An Analysis of Sports Illustrated Feature Articles, 1954-1987," *Sociology of Sport Journal,* 8(1991): 16-32.

[7] Lynn Silverstein, *Full-Court Press? The New York Times' Coverage of the 1995 Women's NCAA Basketball Tournament.* Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, California: Anaheim, 1996.

[8] Judith Jenkins George, *Lack of News Coverage for Women's Athletics: A Questionable Practice of Newspapers Priorities.* Women's Sports Foundation web page - www.womenssportsfoundation.org, March 2002.

[9] Margaret Carlisle Duncan, "Sports Photographs and Sexual Difference: Images of Women and Men in the 1984 and 1988 Olympic Games," *Sociology of Sport Journal,* 7(1990): 22-43.

[10] Studies include: Charles Tuggle, "Television Sports Reporting of Female Athletics: Quantitative and Qualitative Content Analysis of ESPN Sports Center and CNN Sports Tonight," *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 57-06A(1996); Charles Tuggle, Suzanne Huffman, and Dana Scott, "A Descriptive Analysis of NBC's Coverage of the 2000 Summer Olympics," *Media Report to Women*, Summer 2001; and Karen Weiler, *Images of Illusion, Images of Reality. Gender Differentials in Televised Sport--the 1980's and Beyond.* Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance, Indiana: Indianapolis, 1992.

[11] Margaret Carlisle Duncan, Michael Messner, Linda Williams, and Kerry Jensen, *Gender Stereotyping in Televised Sports.* Study for the Amateur Athletic Foundation of Los Angeles, 1992.

[12] Mary Jo Kane. "Media Coverage of the Female Athlete Before, During,and After Title IX: Sports Illustrated Revisited," *Journal of Sport Management,* 2(1988): 87-99.

CHAPTER III: RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study examined whether women's sports magazines portrayed women in the stereotypical roles as previously discussed.

The research questions for this study are:

- Will the three women's sports magazines portray women's sports as being something "other," something different, something not the norm, and portray men's sports as being the "real" representation of sport?
- Will the three women's sports magazines portray female athletes in sexy, feminine roles or as athletes active and succeeding at their sport?
- Will the three women's sports magazines portray female athletes in traditional roles as wives, mothers, and/or victims, or in strong, athletic roles?

CHAPTER IV: METHODOLOGY

A content analysis was used for this study. The three magazines examined were *Real Sports, Sports Illustrated for Women* and *Conde Nast Women's Sports & Fitness*. The study covered all issues of each of the three magazines through September 2000 since their inception: 1997 for *Sports Illustrated for Women* and 1998 for the other two magazines. This time period covered the period when these women's sports magazines first appeared and a time when women's sports was being emphasized.

During the time of the study, *Real Sports* published eight issues with one issue in 1998, four in 1999, and three in 2000. *Sports Illustrated for Women* published a total of ten issues: two issues in 1997, none in 1998 and four each in 1999 and 2000. *Conde Nast Women's Sports & Fitness* published a total of twenty-two issues for this time frame, as it changed from a monthly to a bimonthly, then back to a monthly. This included nine issues in 1998, six issues in 1999 and seven issues in 2000. The total number of issues analyzed was forty.

Content categories were created to analyze how the three magazines were covering female athletes. The three major categories were the covers, the advertisements and the feature articles. Each cover was coded for which sport the photograph represented, whether the photograph was an action shot or a non-action shot, how the person or persons on the cover were dressed and whether it was an individual or two or more persons on the cover. Each teaser on the cover was also coded for its emphasis on athleticism, or other issues such as health, beauty or exercise.

Each full page advertisement was also coded. The type of advertisement was recorded. The advertisements' photographs were also coded for whether they were sports related or not, how many featured males and how many featured females, whether the pictures were of action or non-action images, and whether the people in the advertisements were in athletic attire or non-athletic attire.

Each feature article was also coded for several items including the focus of the article, physical descriptions of the athletes, and the sport the athlete was associated with. All photographs accompanying the feature articles were also coded as to whether they reflected a sport or not, whether it was an action picture or non-action picture, whether athletic wear or non-athletic wear was featured and whether the photograph was of an individual or a group. The author did all the coding.

CHAPTER V: FINDINGS

This study found that between the three magazines, there were differences in how female athletes were covered. Three major categories examined in the context of this study were the covers, the advertisements and the feature articles. For the covers, the photographs and the teasers were coded. *Real Sports* used athletes in athletic poses and in uniforms, and its teasers were almost exclusively focused on athletics. *Sports Illustrated for Women* also had female athletes on its covers and most were in athletic dress, although the athletes were in non-action poses. Its teasers were mostly athletic, which clothing coming in second. *Conde Nast Women's Sports & Fitness* had little athletic focus on its covers. The photographs were mostly posed women in swimwear, and the teasers focused on (in order) exercise, athletics, health and travel.

Advertisements for sporting events, footwear and vehicles made up the majority of advertisements in *Real Sports* and *Sports Illustrated for Women*. Advertisements in *Conde Nast Women's Sports & Fitness* focused on vehicles, cosmetics, footwear, clothing and food. There was little athletic representation in the advertisements in *Conde Nast Women's Sports & Fitness*.

The feature articles in *Real Sports* focused on athletics including sporting events, specific athletes, specific sports and sports teams. It had no articles that focused on other fitness-type areas like exercise, weight loss, etc. *Sports Illustrated for Women* also focused on sports, but the majority of its articles featured specific athletes. *Conde Nast Women's Sports & Fitness* did not focus on sports. Its articles mainly featured general fitness and exercise.

Real Sports

For this study, each issue between its inaugural issue in 1998 through September 2000 was examined, totaling eight issues. For the magazine's covers, basketball was the most prominent sport with 62.5 percent of the covers (see Table 1). All of the covers featured action shots, including one female basketball player dunking the basketball (see Table 2). Seven of the eight covers had athletes in athletic wear (see Table 3).

Women dominated the cover photographs (see Table 6). These findings demonstrate that *Real Sports* is taking a different approach to portraying female athletes when compared to other media outlets. The covers all had action shots, and had athletes clothed in their athletic uniforms. One reader wrote "It is wonderful to see live, action shots of women in sports, not only through your entire magazine, but on the cover as well! It is tiresome to see the typical 'women's sports, fitness and health' magazines tout the stereotyped woman on the cover in a swimsuit, highlighting weight loss, sex, hair, makeup, etc."[1]

The teasers that ran on the cover of the magazine were also coded (see Table 7). In *Real Sports*, the vast majority of teasers were sports focused, accounting for 91 percent of all teasers. The columns that ran in *Real Sports* also had a focus on athletics, with 88 percent of the coverage (see Table 8).

Real Sports is lagging behind *Sports Illustrated for Women* and *Conde Nast Women's Sports & Fitness* in the number of advertisements per issue. In an interview with the author, Amy Love, *Real Sports* publisher, expressed her frustration over her lack of success in getting businesses to place advertisements in the magazine. With a total of seventy-four advertisements in the eight issues, the average number of advertisements per issue was 9.25. In contrast, the average number of advertisements in *Sports Illustrated for Women* was 34.6 and *Conde Nast Women's Sports & Fitness* was 39.

Sporting events had the most advertisements in *Real Sports* with 24.5 percent, with the majority of those sporting events being female sports events (see Table 9). Footwear had the next highest percentage with 16.5 percent and clothing and entertainment each had 10 percent.

Fifty-two feature articles were coded (see Table 13). *Real Sports* had the highest percentage of female writers, with 69 percent (see Table 14). *Real Sports* also had the highest number of articles with females being the subject of the article, with 98 percent (see Table 15).

To determine the focus of the article, thirteen categories were created (see Table 16). *Real Sports* only used five categories: sport event, specific athlete, specific sport, sport team and other. Noticeably absent were such categories as beauty, self-help, travel, exercise, weight loss and fashion. Most articles focused on a specific sport with 42 percent.

Real Sports had the lowest incidences of physical and emotional descriptions of female athletes in its feature articles (see Table 17). Weight and height were the most common physical description for *Real Sports* with 22 percent. However, these descriptions were almost exclusively standard statistics listed for the athlete, not a commentary on the athlete's appearance. The second most frequent description was emotional outbursts with 19 percent, with crying making up the majority of the references (see Table 18). However, when emotional references were made, they related to an athlete pushing herself to the limit in play, in recovering from an injury, or expressing her despair over losing a hard fought battle. Other common descriptions included injuries and/or surgery and body structure. Overall, the descriptions tended to reinforce strong female athletes, including descriptions such as "bruising post player" and "steely blue-eyed stare."

In the feature articles, professional sports received 37 percent of the coverage, other sporting events received 31 percent and college events received 21 percent of the coverage (see Table 19). Of the fifty-two articles, 100 percent of the articles had a sports focus (see Table 20). The four major sports that were featured were basketball (34 percent), soccer (15 percent), other - which often featured multiple sports (13 percent), and softball (10 percent). These results are not typical of other media outlets, as the majority of these sports are team oriented and don't fit in the typical "acceptable" sports model for women.

Of the fifty-two articles in the study, fifty of the articles had photos of women and eleven of the articles had pictures of men (see Table 21). Sports was the focus of 96 percent of the photographs. Eighty-three percent of pictures were action-oriented (see Table 23). Athletic wear was featured in 84 percent of the photographs (see Table 24, Table 25). Female athletes are shown participating in their sport, they are wearing their athletic uniforms and the frequency of shots with individuals and shots with two or more athletes is almost the same.

Sports Illustrated for Women

A total of ten issues were coded for this study, spanning from the inaugural issue in spring of 1997 through September/October 2000. Basketball and soccer were the sports most often featured on the cover of the magazine (see Table 1).

The remaining sports were, in order of frequency, track and field, tennis and mountain boarding. Ninety percent of the *Sports Illustrated for Women's* covers were non-action photographs (see Table 2). The magazine did feature most of the athletes on the cover in their athletic uniforms, with 90 percent falling into this category (see Table 3). The magazine put an emphasis on individual athletes instead of team photographs (see Table 5). Nine of the ten issues had individual athletes on the cover. All ten covers had females on them, while only one cover, the swimsuit issue, had Shaquille O'Neal, a NBA basketball player, on it (see Table 6).

Sports Illustrated for Women's covers tended to cover women's sports in some traditional ways, but also in some new ways. Traditional coverage included the vast majority of athletes being featured in non-action photographs and focused on individuals instead of teams. Conversely, the magazine did feature team sports on the cover, including basketball and soccer and it featured the athletes in athletic wear in most of the issues.

The teasers on the cover were mostly athletic (38.5 percent). The second highest category was clothing with 19 percent, and the remaining was exercise, health, beauty, travel and other (see Table 7).

The magazine's columns also had a similar representation with athletic columns being the most prevalent with 20 percent of the total, nutrition/diet was right behind with 19 percent (see Table 8). These were followed by clothing, exercise, beauty, health, travel and steps to improve life. The columns tended to generally focus on fitness including such topics as yoga moves to relieve menstrual cramps, products to pamper your feet, new athletic clothing styles, and summer skin and hair tips.

Footwear and vehicles were featured most often in the magazine's advertisements, each with 14 percent (see Table 9). Other advertisements included sporting events, clothing, entertainment, food and sporting gear.

Seventy-one feature articles were coded in the study. Female writers wrote 46 percent of the articles, and male writers wrote 33 percent of the articles. *Sports Illustrated for Women* did focus almost exclusively on female athletes, as women received 93 percent of the coverage and men received 7 percent (see Table 15).

Sports Illustrated for Women tended to focus on specific female athletes, with fifty-five percent of the articles focused on a specific athlete (see Table 16). However, the type of coverage these articles received seem to fit more with the traditional feminine roles.

The top four descriptions of female athletes were weight and height (19 percent), marital status (15 percent), motherhood status (13 percent) and emotional outbursts - mostly crying (11 percent).

Ninety-three percent of the features articles were sports related (see Table 19). The least covered of all sports were professional sports. Sports that were not professional or college and other sport/fitness articles received the most coverage with 25 percent and 24 percent respectively, and college sports received 23 percent. The majority of coverage was basketball with 35 percent (see Table 20). The second highest percentage, with 24 percent, was sports that fit in the "other" category. These were sports not fitting the traditional categories of sports and included sports such as surfing, wakeboarding, rollerblading, mountain boarding, etc. Non-sports articles received 7 percent of the coverage.

A total of 453 photographs with feature articles were coded. Of all the photographs, 91 percent of them had females in them, and 31 percent had men in them (see Table 21). Seventy percent of the pictures were sports oriented, and 30 percent were not sports oriented (see Table 22). Of *Sports Illustrated for Women's* 453 pictures, 47 percent featured athletes in action poses, and 53 percent in non-action poses (see Table 23). Athletic wear was featured in 68 percent of the photographs and non-athletic wear 32 percent (see Table 24, Table 25). Finally, *Sports Illustrated for Women* featured individual athletes more than any other category, with 51 percent of the coverage (see Table 26). Most of the photographs emphasized sports over non-sports and most of the athletes were wearing athletic attire. However, most of the athletes were featured in non-action poses and mostly individuals were shown, instead of teams.

While *Sports Illustrated for Women* is including more nontraditional sports and featuring women in athletic wear, it is still perpetuating old feminine stereotypes by focusing on female athletes personal lives and emphasizing their appearance and their domestic roles.

Conde Nast Women's Sports & Fitness

Twenty-two issues of this magazine were coded starting in January 1998 and ending in September 2000, the magazine's last issue. The magazine began as a monthly, then went to a bimonthly schedule and then returned to a monthly schedule.

The majority of covers,77.5 percent, had no sports connection (see Table 1). Most consisted of a woman/model pictured in a bathing suit. Non-action covers were featured 95.5 percent of the time (see Table 2). Eighty-two percent of the covers featured women in non-athletic wear, with 56 percent being swimsuits (see Table 3, Table 4). Only 18 percent of the covers had women in athletic wear, though none of the covers featured athletes in their official athletic uniforms. One hundred percent of the cover photographs had one individual woman on the cover (see Table 5, Table 6). The editor of *Conde Nast Women's Sports & Fitness* is quoted as saying that the magazine will meet "the very high aesthetic standards of the women's magazine industry. That doesn't mean if a female athlete is ugly, we wouldn't put her in the book. Just not on the cover."[2]

The cover teasers also had a lack of sports coverage. Thirty-eight percent of the teasers focused on exercise, 15 percent on athletics, 14 percent on health and 11 percent on travel (see Table 7).

Columns were represented in a similar way with exercise receiving 24 percent of the columns, clothing with 16 percent, athletic with 14 percent, nutrition/diet with 10 percent, travel with 9 percent and health with 7 percent (see Table 8). Standard topics in the columns section included exercise routines, fitness trends, sporting gear, nutrition, style, beauty, food and travel.

Vehicles were the most advertised product in *Conde Nast Women's Sports & Fitness* with 22 percent of the advertisements (see Table 9). The next highest categories were cosmetics/hygiene with 14 percent, footwear with 13 percent, clothing with 10 percent and food with 9 percent. The *Conde Nast Women's Sports & Fitness* advertisements did not have many strong female athletes in them.

In this magazine, 169 articles were coded. Females made up 57 percent of the authors, and men made up 17 percent (see Table 14). Females were the subject of the feature articles 55 percent of the time (see Table 15). A full 44 percent of articles had neither men nor women as the focus of the article. Most of these articles focused on exercise, nutrition, health, etc., and therefore did not focus on a person, male or female.

The focus of the articles was most often on general fitness with 19 percent (see Table 16). Following closely were exercise with 16 percent, specific athlete with 14 percent and fashion with 11 percent.

Descriptions in *Conde Nast Women's Sports & Fitness* included marital status and body structure, which tied with 12 percent each, followed closely by weight and height and hair style, both with 11 percent, and clothing with 10 percent.

Conde Nast Women's Sports & Fitness tended to downplay female athletes' skills and, instead emphasized their domestic roles. One article in the February 1998 issue discussed fear, claiming that women experience fear more than men when it comes to sports. The article goes on to quote a professor of exercise physiology at the University of Houston: "Female athletes tend to catastrophize more, meaning they collapse in despair when things go wrong. Men will be able to cope better and have a more cognitive approach."

Of the 169 articles, 77 percent had no sport focus. An example of this type of article was the fashion lay-outs that ran in every issue of *Conde Nast Women's Sports & Fitness*. Of the 23 percent that did have a sports focus, 12 percent was on "other" nontraditional sports, 6 percent was on Olympic athletes or the World Cup Soccer team, 4.5 percent on professional athletes and .5 percent on college athletes (see Table 19). Ninety-one percent was made up of articles where sports were not applicable or the sports focus was on general fitness or some other type of fitness/nontraditional "sport."

Conde Nast Women's Sports & Fitness had 1,706 photographs coded in this study. Eighty-nine percent of the photographs featured women and 22 percent featured men (see Table 21). As already witnessed in cover photographs, non-sports were much more prevalent than sports photographs (see Table 22). Non-sports made up 67 percent, while sports photographs had 33 percent. Seventy percent of the photographs were of non-action shots, and 30 percent contained action (see Table 23). Athletic wear was photographed 54 percent, and non-athletic wear 46 percent. However, fitness or workout clothing was coded as athletic. Few of these photographs coded as athletic featured athletic uniforms (see Table 24, Table 25). Individuals were featured in 55.5 percent of the photographs (see Table 26).

From the results of the study, *Conde Nast Women's Sports & Fitness* seemed to reinforce traditional feminine stereotypes for women. The focus clearly is not on sports, but on women's personal lives and their appearance, and their domestic roles. The female athlete really has very little to do with this magazine.

NOTES

[1] Letters to *Real Sports*, *Real Sports*, Winter 1999: 12.

[2] "Women's Sports Magazines Seeking Identity, Advertisers," *Media Report To Women*, Vol. 26, No. 1, Winter 1998.

CHAPTER VI: DISCUSSION

This study looked at women's sports magazines to examine the following research questions:

1) Will the three women's sports magazines portray women's sports as being something other, something different, something not the norm, and portray men's sports as the real representation of sport?

2) Will the three women's sports magazines portray female athletes in sexy, feminine roles or as athletes active and succeeding at their sport?

3) Will the three women's sports magazines portray female athletes in traditional roles as wives, mothers, and/or victims, or in strong, athletic roles?

The results for all three questions are mixed:

1) The focus of the three magazines was to cover women's sports and/or fitness. As a result, there were no articles directly comparing women's sports and men's sports. Therefore, no conclusion can be drawn regarding the first research question. However, there were incidences where a female athlete's abilities were downplayed as less than a man's abilities.

Overall, *Sports Illustrated for Women* and *Conde Nast Women's Sports & Fitness* did tend to portray women's sports in a "less than" role compared to men's sports. However, there were not enough examples to draw any findings. In contrast, *Real Sports* did not draw any direct comparisons with men's sports and did not downplay women's sports.

2) Focusing on an athlete's femininity occurred with overwhelming regularity in *Sports Illustrated for Women* and *Conde Nast Women's Sports & Fitness.*

Most of the articles in *Sports Illustrated for Women* and *Conde Nast Women's Sports and Fitness* feature female athletes' personal lives, and not in their athletic roles. *Real Sports* has an entirely different approach. Amy Love, publisher of *Real Sports,* noted that female athletes are beautiful just as they are, in their athletic successes and failures. That is the message that is carried throughout the magazine. Images featured women athletes playing their sport and articles discussed their sports skill, not their favorite shopping destination, their favorite make-up or other unrelated topics.

The findings of this study demonstrate that *Sports Illustrated for Women* and *Conde Nast Women's Sports & Fitness* put a priority on portraying female athletes in feminine roles. Females were regularly featured in non-athletic clothing, often with athletes posed seductively. *Real Sports*, in contrast, focused almost exclusively on the sport and the athlete's participation in that sport. As a result, the reader would see almost exclusively action photographs with women in their athletic uniform.

3) *Sports Illustrated for Women* and *Conde Nast Women's Sports & Fitness* magazines also focused on an athlete's role as mother and/or wife and to a lesser degree her role as a victim. *Real Sports* again kept its focus on the athlete in her athletic role. The athlete's marital and motherhood status was not emphasized, and most times not even mentioned, in articles or in photographs.

Given the results of this study, *Sports Illustrated for Women* and *Conde Nast Women's Sports & Fitness* magazines are both reinforcing traditional female stereotypes in their portrayal of female athletes. *Real Sports* focused almost entirely on the actual sport. There is very little attention devoted to the athlete's personal life. Articles mostly focused on a sport, instead of a specific athlete, and discussed game play and techniques, instead of personal information about the athletes.

According to *Whatever It Takes - Women on Woman's Sports,* this emphasis on portraying female athletes in domestic and feminine roles reinforces the idea that these roles are more important for women to achieve as opposed to athletic success. The authors argued that being a wife and mother, and being attractive are held up as what women should aspire to as opposed to athletic qualities including "intelligence, courage, hard work, integrity of play, ability to collaborate, and grace under competitive pressure."[1]

Donna Lopiano, executive director of the Women's Sports Foundation, said in an interview with the author that the major ways to increase the popularity of women's sports, is to increase media coverage and to have support from major advertisers.[2] She argued that women's sports are crowded out by men's sports, which takes nearly all of the available space for sports coverage. Without the coverage, there are few opportunities for women's sports to tap into advertising budgets, which results in female sports continually being cash strapped. Lopiano also called on companies producing and selling women's sports products to do more than just offer the products and to begin to actively promote women's sports.

NOTES

[1] Joli Sandoz and Joby Winans, eds, *Whatever it Takes - Women on Woman's Sports*. New York: Farrar, Stratus & Giroux, 1999: 8.

[2] Donna Lopiano. Interview with Susan Francis, 18 December 2001.

CHAPTER VII: CONCLUSION

This study found that two magazines, *Sports Illustrated for Women* and *Conde Nast Women's Sports & Fitness*, tended to portray female athletes in the stereotypical feminine and domestic roles. *Real Sports* tended to portray female athletes without using these stereotypes, by celebrating their athletic successes and featuring their athletic abilities, instead of their personal lives.

Amy Love, publisher, created *Real Sports* out of her house, after waiting several years until she thought the market had matured enough to support a women's sports magazine. Love had a clear vision of creating a women's sports magazine that focused on the female athlete and her sports successes and failures. Not only is Love passionate about creating a new environment for female athletes, so are her readers. The audience for *Real Sports* is widespread, and includes teenage girls, middle aged women and middle-aged fathers of girls. They are sports enthusiasts and they want to see female athletes celebrated for being athletes. The commitment by Love and the readers is a large reason for the magazine being created and its continued survival.

In contrast, *Sports Illustrated for Women* and *Conde Nast Women's Sports & Fitness* were created by large publishing companies. Their focus was to find an untapped market and to reach it to increase sales and profits. *Sports Illustrated for Women* came from the publishers of *Sports Illustrated*, a magazine that has been criticized for years for its lack of coverage of female sports and overcoverage of swimsuit models. The majority of the staff of *Sports Illustrated for Women* came from *Sports Illustrated*.

Sports coverage in *Conde Nast Women's Sports & Fitness* was nearly nonexistent. Again, this company saw a possible niche to market to with a
fitness focus. Conde Nast publishes a wealth of women's magazines, including *Vogue, Self, Glamour, Bride's, Allure* and *House & Garden*. Clearly, *Conde Nast Women's Sports & Fitness* was designed to fit into this type of design. Its focus was to include the traditional women's magazines coverage including make-up tips, relationship advice, health tips, and to also include information on fitness trends that would help women to get into better shape for purposes such as attracting men.

Even though *Sports Illustrated for Women* and *Conde Nast Women's Sports & Fitness* had female editors, their approach seems to uphold the traditional method of portraying female athletes. One would argue that with female editors, the coverage should have been more about celebrating the female athlete, as opposed to what she was wearing or who she was dating. The author would argue that the institutions that created these two magazines played a much larger role in determining the focus of the magazines. Change often comes through small, grassroots organizations that have the freedom to do things outside of the norm. In this case, *Real Sports*, as a little start-up with a committed publisher and staff, has bucked the system that has decreed how female athletes should be covered, and has created an entirely new way of covering these athletes. *Sports Illustrated for Women* and *Conde Nast Women's Sports & Fitness* on the other hand have reinforced the status quo. This apparently was the safe, bankable approach to take, though *Conde Nast Women's Sports & Fitness* folded after its September 2000 issue. There also is the argument that there are not enough women's sports fans for a magazine that focuses so exclusively on women's sports as does *Real Sports*. *Real Sports* circulation remains small at 75,000. Supporting women's sports is still a relatively new concept and there, as of yet, is not a demonstrated sizable group of followers for a real women's sports magazine, for the WNBA, women's sporting products, etc. Given this, a magazine like *Real Sports* has to educate casual readers along the way why this is something to which they should want to subscribe.

The real test will be *Real Sports'* long-term effect. Unfortunately, it's no big revelation that some women's sports magazines cover female athletes in a way that demeans their athletic accomplishments. The bigger question, and one that only time can determine, is the effect magazines like *Real Sports* will have on the long-term coverage of female athletes. One might argue that, at a minimum, it has changed expectations for future publications covering women's sports.

Results of this study may have been flawed by a too broad definition of "sports" and "athletic wear." Clearly, the three magazines had very different definitions of "sport" and "athletic wear." In *Real Sports*, a cover shot of a female basketball player dunking the basketball was coded as a sport and athletic wear. In *Conde Nast Women's Sports and Fitness*, Marion Jones was photographed wearing a sports bra and spandex pants, with no activity. It too would have been coded sports and athletic wear.

The author began this study thinking it would be easy to distinguish between sports and non-sports, but found it to be a rather blurry line. Much clearer definitions for sports and athletic wear could have been created.

In addition, the coding of models was also problematic. Many of the pictures featured in *Conde Nast Women's Sports & Fitness* were of women who appeared to be model like, but no good definition was established for what a model was or was not. There were also several pictures of women in casual dress or in swimwear who appeared to be models, but were athletes in often "nontraditional" sports, such as surfing, beach volleyball, etc. In the photo layouts, they looked like models, but were technically athletes, so they were coded as athletes. A much sharper distinction needed to be made.

Sports Illustrated for Women and *Conde Nast Women's Sports & Fitness* have both been compared to general women's magazines. It would be interesting to see a study that examines if these two magazines are more similar to the general women's magazines than the other sports magazines. They appear to have many of the same format characteristics including health and beauty tips, relationship advice, fashion layouts, and fitness exercises.

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COVERAGE OF FEMALE ATHLETES IN WOMEN'S SPORTS MAGAZINES: A CONTENT ANALYSIS

TABLE 1:
Type of Sport Featured in Cover Photographs

	Real Sports	*Sports Illustrated for Women*	*Conde Nast Women's Sports & Fitness*
Basketball	5 *(62.5%)*	3 *(30%)*	0
Ice Skating	0	0	1 *(4.5%)*
Soccer	1 *(12.5%)*	3 *(30%)*	1 *(4.5%)*
Track & Field	0	2 *(20%)*	1 *(4.5%)*
Tennis	0	1 *(10%)*	1 *(4.5%)*
Cycling	1 *(12.5%)*	0	0
General Fitness	0	0	1 *(4.5%)*
Other	1 *(12.5%)*	1 *(10%)*	17 *(77.5%)*

TABLE 2:
Type of Movement Featured in Cover Photographs

	Real Sports	*Sports Illustrated for Women*	*Conde Nast Women's Sports & Fitness*
Action	8 *(100%)*	1 *(10%)*	1 *(4.5%)*
Non-action	0	9 *(90%)*	21 *(95.5%)*

TABLE 3:
Type of Clothing Featured in Cover Photographs

	Real Sports	*Sports Illustrated for Women*	*Conde Nast Women's Sports & Fitness*
Athletic Wear	7 *(87.5%)*	9 *(90%)*	4 *(18%)*
Non-Athletic Wear	1 *(12.5%)*	1 *(10%)*	18 *(82%)*

TABLE 4:
Type of Non-Athletic Clothing Featured in Cover Photographs

	Real Sports	*Sports Illustrated for Women*	*Conde Nast Women's Sports & Fitness*
Casual Wear	1 *(100%)*	0	7 *(39%)*
Swim Wear	0	1 *(100%)*	10 *(56%)*
Lingerie	0	0	1 *(5%)*

TABLE 5:
Individuals and Teams Featured in Cover Photographs

	Real Sports	*Sports Illustrated for Women*	*Conde Nast Women's Sports & Fitness*
Individual	3 *(37.5%)*	9 *(90%)*	22 *(100%)*
Team	5 *(62.5%)*	1 *(10%)*	0

TABLE 6:
Number of Males and Females Featured in Cover Photographs

	Real Sports	*Sports Illustrated for Women*	*Conde Nast Women's Sports & Fitness*
Male	5	1	0
Female	13	12	22

TABLE 7:
Focus of Teasers Used on Cover

	Real Sports		*Sports Illustrated for Women*		*Conde Nast Women's Sports & Fitness*	
Athletic	41	*(91%)*	20	*(38.5%)*	18	*(15%)*
Health	1	*(2%)*	5	*(10%)*	17	*(14%)*
Beauty	0		1	*(2%)*	0	
Exercise	0		8	*(15%)*	46	*(38%)*
Steps to Improve Life	0		0		5	*(4%)*
Travel	0		1	*(2%)*	13	*(11%)*
Clothing	0		10	*(19%)*	9	*(7%)*
Other	3	*(7%)*	7	*(13.5%)*	13	*(11%)*
Totals	45		52		121	

TABLE 8:
Focus of Columns

	Real Sports		*Sports Illustrated for Women*		*Conde Nast Women's Sports & Fitness*	
Athletic	29	*(88%)*	22	*(20%)*	46	*(14%)*
Health	1	*(3%)*	8	*(7%)*	22	*(7%)*
Beauty	0		10	*(9%)*	14	*(4%)*
Exercise	0		11	*(10%)*	79	*(24%)*
Steps to Improve Life	0		2	*(1%)*	13	*(4%)*
Nutrition/Diet	0		21	*(19%)*	31	*(10%)*
Travel	0		5	*(5%)*	30	*(9%)*
Clothing	0		12	*(11%)*	53	*(16%)*
Other	3	*(9%)*	20	*(18%)*	41	*(12%)*
Totals	33		111		329	

TABLE 9:
Type of Advertisement Used in Full Page Advertisement

	Real Sports		*Sports Illustrated for Women*		*Conde Nast Women's Sports & Fitness*	
Footwear	12	*(16.5%)*	46	*(14%)*	114	*(13%)*
Clothing	7	*(10%)*	35	*(10%)*	86	*(10%)*
Vehicles	5	*(7%)*	47	*(14%)*	185	*(22%)*
Cigarettes	0		4	*(1%)*	0	
Alcohol	0		2	*(.5%)*	11	*(1%)*
Sporting Gear	6	*(8%)*	20	*(6%)*	55	*(6.5%)*
Nutrition/ Diet Aids	1	*(1%)*	8	*(2%)*	50	*(6%)*
Exercise Equipment	0		3	*(1%)*	5	*(.5%)*
Food	1	*(1%)*	25	*(7%)*	74	*(9%)*
Jewelry	1	*(1%)*	3	*(1%)*	15	*(2%)*
Cosmetics/ Hygiene	3	*(4%)*	11	*(3%)*	120	*(14%)*
Medicine	1	*(1%)*	7	*(1.5%)*	47	*(5.5%)*
Travel	0		3	*(1%)*	5	*(.5%)*
Electronics/ Technology	1	*(1%)*	6	*(1.5%)*	11	*(1%)*
Sporting Events	18	*(24.5%)*	28	*(8.5%)*	15	*(1.5%)*
Financial Investment	5	*(7%)*	12	*(3%)*	12	*(1.5%)*
Entertainment	7	*(10%)*	27	*(8%)*	9	*(1%)*
Other	6	*(8%)*	59	*(17%)*	6	*(8%)*
Totals	74		346		858	

TABLE 10:
Gender of Athlete in Full Page Advertisements

	Real Sports	*Sports Illustrated for Women*	*Conde Nast Women's Sports & Fitness*
Male	0	0	4 *(6%)*
Female	76 *(100%)*	65 *(100%)*	62 *(92%)*

TABLE 11:
Athletic Level of Athlete in Full Page Advertisements

	Real Sports	*Sports Illustrated for Women*	*Conde Nast Women's Sports & Fitness*
College	9 *(15%)*	2 *(3%)*	0
Professional	39 *(65%)*	50 *(65%)*	29 *(43%)*
Other	12 *(20%)*	25 *(32%)*	39 *(57%)*

TABLE 12:
Type of Sport Featured in Full Page Advertisements

	Real Sports	*Sports Illustrated for Women*	*Conde Nast Women's Sports & Fitness*
Basketball	19 *(24%)*	20 *(21%)*	13 *(19%)*
Gymnastics	1 *(1%)*	2 *(2%)*	0
Golf	1 *(1%)*	4 *(4%)*	2 *(3%)*
Hockey	0	1 *(1%)*	2 *(3%)*
Ice Skating	0	2 *(2%)*	3 *(4%)*
Soccer	9 *(12%)*	26 *(27%)*	13 *(19%)*
Track & Field	1 *(1%)*	5 *(5%)*	10 *(15%)*
Swimming	2 *(3%)*	4 *(4%)*	4 *(6%)*
Tennis	22 *(28%)*	18 *(18%)*	7 *(10%)*
Volleyball	3 *(4%)*	3 *(3%)*	0
Softball	5 *(7%)*	2 *(2%)*	0
Field Hockey	3 *(4%)*	0	0
Cycling	0	4 *(4%)*	0
Weight Lifting	2 *(3%)*	0	0
Gen. Fitness	4 *(5%)*	1 *(1%)*	0
Other	5 *(7%)*	6 *(6%)*	15 *(21%)*
Totals	77	98	69

TABLE 13:
Number and Length of Feature Articles

	Real Sports	*Sports Illustrated for Women*	*Conde Nast Women's Sports & Fitness*
Number of Articles	52	71	169
Average # of articles/issue	6.5	7.1	7.7
Average per article	35.3	25.6	26.8

TABLE 14:
Gender of Author of Feature Articles

	Real Sports	*Sports Illustrated for Women*	*Conde Nast Women's Sports & Fitness*
Male	10 *(19%)*	26 *(33%)*	29 *(17%)*
Female	36 *(69%)*	36 *(46%)*	97 *(57%)*
Couldn't Tell	6 *(12%)*	17 *(21%)*	43 *(26%)*
Totals	52	79	169

TABLE 15:
Gender of Subject of Feature Articles

	Real Sports	*Sports Illustrated for Women*	*Conde Nast Women's Sports & Fitness*
Male	0	5 *(7%)*	1 *(1%)*
Female	51 *(98%)*	66 *(93%)*	93 *(55%)*
Neither	1 *(2%)*	0	175 *(44%)*
Totals	52	71	169

TABLE 16:
Focus of Feature Articles

	Real Sports	*Sports Illustrated for Women*	*Conde Nast Women's Sports & Fitness*
Health	0	0	12 *(7%)*
Beauty	0	0	7 *(4%)*
Self-Help	0	1 *(1%)*	6 *(4%)*
Sport Event	14 *(27%)*	5 *(8%)*	6 *(4%)*
Specific Athlete	6 *(12%)*	39 *(55%)*	24 *(14%)*
Specific Sport	22 *(42%)*	4 *(6%)*	7 *(4%)*
Sports Team	3 *(6%)*	7 *(10%)*	1 *(1%)*
Sports Technique	0	0	3 *(2%)*
Exercise	0	1 *(1%)*	27 *(16%)*
Weight Loss	0	0	5 *(3%)*
Fashion	0	1 *(1%)*	19 *(11%)*
General Fitness	0	1 *(1%)*	32 *(19%)*
Other	7 *(13%)*	12 *(17%)*	20 *(12%)*
Totals	52	71	169

TABLE 17:
Physical Descriptions Used in Feature Articles

	Real Sports	*Sports Illustrated for Women*	*Conde Nast Women's Sports & Fitness*
Weight & Height	15 *(22%)*	48 *(19%)*	43 *(11%)*
Hair Style	1 *(1.5%)*	12 *(4.5%)*	43 *(11%)*
Makeup/ Grooming	0	5 *(2%)*	11 *(3%)*
Skin/ Complexion	1 *(1.5%)*	2 *(1%)*	29 *(8%)*
Body Structure	8 *(12%)*	20 *(8%)*	45 *(12%)*
Facial Feature	3 *(4.5%)*	9 *(3.5%)*	24 *(6%)*
Jewelry	0	0	11 *(3%)*
Voice	0	1 *(.5%)*	6 *(2%)*
Clothing	6 *(9%)*	11 *(4%)*	36 *(10%)*
Injury/Surgery	9 *(13%)*	9 *(3.5%)*	0
Emotional Outbursts	13 *(19%)*	29 *(11%)*	19 *(5%)*
Expressions of Fear	0	8 *(3%)*	13 *(4%)*
Marital Status	5 *(7%)*	38 *(15%)*	44 *(12%)*
Children	3 *(4.5%)*	34 *(13%)*	34 *(9%)*
Other	4 *(6%)*	31 *(12%)*	16 *(4%)*
Totals	68	257	374

TABLE 18:
Emotional Outburst Descriptions Used in Feature Articles

	Real Sports	*Sports Illustrated for Women*	*Conde Nast Women's Sports & Fitness*
Crying	9 *(69%)*	22 *(76%)*	14 *(74%)*
Yelling	1 *(8%)*	0	0
Tantrums	2 *(15%)*	2 *(7%)*	2 *(10%)*
Other	1 *(8%)*	5 *(17%)*	3 *(16%)*

TABLE 19:
Athletic Level of Athlete in Feature Articles

	Real Sports	*Sports Illustrated for Women*	*Conde Nast Women's Sports & Fitness*
College	11 *(21%)*	16 *(23%)*	1 *(.5%)*
Professional	19 *(37%)*	15 *(21%)*	8 *(4.5%)*
Other Sport Event	16 *(31%)*	18 *(25%)*	10 *(6%)*
Other	6 *(11%)*	17 *(24%)*	20 *(12%)*
Sport Not Focus	0	5 *(7%)*	130 *(77%)*
Totals	52	71	169

TABLE 20:
Type of Sport Featured in Feature Articles

	Real Sports	*Sports Illustrated for Women*	*Conde Nast Women's Sports & Fitness*
Not Applicable	3 *(6%)*	5 *(7%)*	90 *(53.5%)*
Basketball	18 *(34%)*	25 *(35%)*	1 *(.5%)*
Football	2 *(4%)*	1 *(1.5%)*	0
Golf	2 *(4%)*	0	0
Hockey	0	1 *(1.5%)*	1 *(.5%)*
Ice Skating	0	3 *(4%)*	3 *(2%)*
Soccer	8 *(15%)*	7 *(10%)*	0
Track and Field	1 *(2%)*	6 *(8.5%)*	2 *(1%)*
Swimming	0	0	2 *(1%)*
Tennis	3 *(6%)*	3 *(4%)*	5 *(3%)*
Volleyball	2 *(4%)*	2 *(3%)*	0
Softball	5 *(10%)*	0	1 *(.5%)*
Field Hockey	1 *(2%)*	0	0
Cycling	0	0	1 *(.5%)*
General Fitness	0	1 *(1.5%)*	39 *(23.5%)*
Other	7 *(13%)*	17 *(24%)*	24 *(14%)*
Totals	52	71	169

TABLE 21:
Gender of Persons in Photographs in Feature Articles

	Real Sports	*Sports Illustrated for Women*	*Conde Nast Women's Sports & Fitness*
Male	11 *(21%)*	22 *(31%)*	37 *(22%)*
Female	50 *(96%)*	65 *(92%)*	151 *(89%)*
Total Articles	52	71	169

TABLE 22:
Sport Focus of Persons in Photographs in Feature Articles

	Real Sports	*Sports Illustrated for Women*	*Conde Nast Women's Sports & Fitness*
Sport	313 *(96%)*	317 *(70%)*	564 *(33%)*
Non-sport	14 *(4%)*	136 *(30%)*	1,142 *(67%)*
Total Photos	327	453	1,706

TABLE 23:
Type of Movement of Persons in Photographs in Feature Articles

	Real Sports	*Sports Illustrated for Women*	*Conde Nast Women's Sports & Fitness*
Action	271 *(83%)*	214 *(47%)*	507 *(30%)*
Non-action	56 *(17%)*	239 *(53%)*	1,199 *(70%)*

TABLE 24:
Type of Clothing of Persons in Photographs in Feature Articles

	Real Sports	*Sports Illustrated for Women*	*Conde Nast Women's Sports & Fitness*
Athletic Wear	275 *(84%)*	309 *(68%)*	927 *(54%)*
Non-athletic Wear	52 *(16%)*	144 *(32%)*	779 *(46%)*

TABLE 25:
Type of Non-Athletic Clothing of Persons in Photographs in Feature Articles

	Real Sports	*Sports Illustrated for Women*	*Conde Nast Women's Sports & Fitness*
Business Wear	5 *(10%)*	0	10 *(1%)*
Casual Wear	38 *(73%)*	90 *(62.5%)*	258 *(33%)*
Swim Wear	1 *(2%)*	17 *(12%)*	200 *(25.5%)*
Lingerie	0	0	12 *(1.5%)*
Sexy	0	0	14 *(2%)*
Other	8 *(15%)*	37 *(25.5%)*	285 *(37%)*

TABLE 26:
Type of Grouping of Persons in Photographs in Feature Articles

	Real Sports	*Sports Illustrated for Women*	*Conde Nast Women's Sports & Fitness*
Individual	140 *(43%)*	231 *(51%)*	944 *(55.5%)*
2+ Athletes	121 *(37%)*	95 *(21%)*	141 *(8.5%)*
Team	20 *(6%)*	30 *(6%)*	16 *(.5%)*
Crowd	14 *(4%)*	4 *(1%)*	10 *(.5%)*
Family	1 *(.5%)*	43 *(10%)*	35 *(2%)*
Models	0	0	231 *(14%)*
Other	31 *(9.5%)*	50 *(11%)*	329 *(19%)*

APPENDIX

MAGAZINE PROFILES

Sports Illustrated for Women

Sports Illustrated began publishing *women/sport* (later changed to *Sports Illustrated for Women)* in the Spring of 1997. Two issues of the magazine were published in 1997, one in the spring and one in the fall. The spring issue featured WNBA basketball player, Sheryl Swoopes, who was six months pregnant, with the cover line, "*A Star is Born: Sheryl Swoopes and the WNBA are both due in June.*" The second issue featured Mia Hamm, a star of the U.S. Women's World Cup soccer team. The cover line was "*Mia Hamm - the best soccer player in the world,*" though the title of the article was "*Reluctant Diva.*"

According to *Sports Illustrated* publicity materials, the target audience for *Sports Illustrated for Women* is the "Title IX generation," women age eighteen to thirty-four. The magazine has focused more on personal stories and fitness tips. Sandra Bailey, the magazine's founding editor, commented that women are more interest in the human side of a story, instead of just getting statistics. Bailey noted that women would be more interested in information about a player's brother who had cancer, instead of who was most recently traded or what sporting record was broken.

In 1999, the reformatted *Sports Illustrated for Women* began a quarterly publication schedule. The March 1999 issue featured a fourteen-year old basketball player and included articles on how to play through your menstrual period, sports horoscopes, and celebrities who used to be cheerleaders. According to Jeff Metcalfe, in the *Arizona Republic,* this type of sports coverage was not met with much support from sportswriters. One female sportswriter was quoted that she threw the magazine away because of the lack of sports coverage. Distribution for these issues were 450,000.

Bailey defined the magazine's audience as high-school or college-age women who grew up with the Title IX benefit. She called this group a "post-feminist generation" who basically has the opportunity to play any sports they want to. She also saw her audience as participants of sport activities, as opposed to being fans of women's sports.

Sports Illustrated for Women is a "little sister" to *Sports Illustrated,* who boasts a circulation of over three million and is published weekly. *Sports Illustrated for Kids* began publishing eight years before *Sports Illustrated for Women. Sports Illustrated for Kids* has a circulation of 950,000 and is published monthly. The *Sports Illustrated* web page, as of April 2002, had three media kits available for more information on their publications. The media kits are for *Sports Illustrated, Sports Illustrated for Kids* and *CNN - Sports Illustrated.* There is no mention of *Sports Illustrated for Women.*

Conde Nast Women's Sports & Fitness

Conde Nast Women's Sports & Fitness began as two separate magazines. *Women's Sports + Fitness* was created in 1974 by Billie Jean King. Conde Nast acquired the magazine in 1998. Conde Nast was already publishing a magazine called *Conde Nast Sports for Women,* which they began publishing in 1997. These two titles were combined into *Conde Nast Women's Sports & Fitness* in 1998. Suzanne Grimes, publisher of *Conde Nast Women's Sports & Fitness,* acknowledged that having sports displayed prominently in the title was a mistake for the magazine. She noted that by containing the word "sport," it was categorized with other sports magazines primarily targeted to men. According to Grimes, by adding in the word "fitness," the magazine was moved to the women's magazines section. By making this switch, the magazine's advertising jumped by 24 percent and circulation went up by 89 percent to 475,000 copies. Fitness became the overwhelming theme for the magazine.

A reader in the July 2000 issue had the following to say, "Call me crazy, but your Special Fitness Issue (May 2000) is no different from any other one you've published. You consistently run images of somewhat fit (but not too muscular -- ooh, that would be scary!) models who pose in non-active stances. Seemingly, according to *Women's Sports & Fitness,* the only reason to engage in sports is to burn calories to "look good" and attain the "perfect body." Wake up, *Women's Sports & Fitness!* The other half of your name, Sports, is hardly evident in the magazine. Rather than being another fitness publication, you should offer positive images of real women engaged in real sports."

Conde Nast Women's Sports & Fitness ceased publication after its September 2000 issue. Conde Nast spent over $70 million trying to make the magazine successful.

Real Sports

Real Sports (which was originally titled *Amy Love's Real Sports)* began publishing in the winter of 1998 and was published quarterly throughout 1999 and 2000. Amy Love, who was part of a lawsuit at age nine to be able to play on a boy's soccer team, because there was no girl's soccer team, started *Real Sports* in her house. Distribution for the magazine is 75,000. *Real Sports* has a focus of covering women's sports exclusively and presenting female athletes in their athletic successes. It eschews the fitness model that other magazines have used and emphasizes hard-hitting news and action-oriented photography of female athletes. Comments from readers include "Finally a real sports magazine for women. No longer are 'women's sports' magazines just scantily clad, thin women photographed doing quasi-athletic activities. *Real Sports* is real sports! Not glamor clothed athleticism." Another reader wrote "It is refreshing to read a women's sports magazine that has professional hard coverage of women's sports/athletes instead of 'fluff.' I wanted to see the power and grace of an outstanding female athlete frozen dramatically in photos. I wanted to read analysis and play-by-play action in the printed word. The photos stir you and the words enliven you. The writers are astute and the photographs dramatic."

In an interview with the author in 2001, Amy Love discussed some of the challenges of publishing an independent women's sports magazine. According to Love, advertising is the number one challenge for the success of *Real Sports*. Love asserted that advertisers have refused to take the magazine seriously because it focuses on women's sports. In addition, because of the magazine's focus, make-up and fashion advertisers have refused to run ads in the magazine. *Real Sports* does not use make-up on the athletes used in photographs. The pictures are real, taken during the actual sporting event, so there also are no athletes pictured in designer fashion outfits. Love also questioned the role of *Sports Illustrated* and Time Warner in advertisers decision to not advertise in *Real Sports*. She argued that given the vast reach of Time Warner, that some advertisers were hesitant to rock the boat. Love also noted that because *Real Sports* is a woman-owned business, she has had difficulty getting a sufficient level of capitalization and venture capital. Love added that *Sports Illustrated for Women* outresources them 100,000 to 1.

Love also discussed how *Real Sports* is different from the other women's sports magazines and women's magazines in general. According to Love, *Sports Illustrated for Women* and *Conde Nast Women's Sports & Fitness* are "quasi-sports, fitness, gossip type publications." Love said that *Real Sports* is very serious about creating a positive image for female athletes, including using action photographs and not running pictures that show half-empty stands.

Love said that *Real Sports* focused on four team sports - soccer, basketball, softball and volleyball, with some individual sports sprinkled in each issue. According to Love, articles are based upon what is happening in the sports world, not who would make a good cover girl.

Love noted that the decision of who will go on the cover of the magazine is determined by how it relates to one of the major feature articles and the quality of the image as a strong female athlete. She added that the other women's sports magazines have a different process that involves getting the prettiest, best-known athlete, or model, bringing them into the studio and spending several rolls of film to get an acceptable photograph. Because *Real Sports* photographs aren't posed, the magazine must hire photographers to go to sporting events to get the photographs. Love noted that unlike men's sports, where photographers will already be attending to take pictures on speculation, for women's sports, the magazine must hire a photographer for every sporting event they want to include in the magazine.

APPENDIX

DESCRIPTION OF COVER PHOTOGRAPHS

Sport, Action, Dress, Jewelry (if any)

Real Sports
Eight issues:

Fall 1998
Basketball - College. Action - Player from Tennessee dunking basketball as fans and male players look on. Athletic wear.

Spring 1999
Basketball - College. Action - three players going for basketball. Athletic wear.

Summer 1999
Soccer. Mia Hamm. Action - running with soccer ball. Athletic wear

Fall 1999
Basketball - WNBA. Action - Cynthia Cooper and Vickie Johnson with Cooper taking a shot. Athletic wear.

Winter 1999
Tennis. Billie Jean King. Action - coaching, yelling and pointing. Casual wear. Jewelry: earrings, watch, bracelet.

Spring 2000
Basketball - College. Action - player from UConn dribbling ball. Athletic wear.

Summer 2000
Cycling/Triathlon. Action - two competitors riding bikes. Athletic wear.

Fall 2000
Basketball - WNBA. Action - four players playing with Lisa Leslie taking a shot. Athletic wear.

__Sports Illustrated for Women__

Ten issues:

Spring 1997

Basketball - WNBA. Sheryl Swoopes. Non-action. Athletic wear, holding basketball, very pregnant. Jewelry - wedding ring.

Fall 1997

Soccer - World Cup. Mia Hamm. Action running with soccer ball. Athletic wear.

Spring 1999

Basketball - High school. Non-action. Athletic wear. Shows smiling face of player with white background.

Summer 1999

Soccer - World Cup. Julie Foudy. No action. Athletic wear with white background. Jewelry- wedding band.

Fall 1999

Soccer- College. Little action - hitting ball with fist. Athletic wear with white background. Jewelry - class ring.

Winter 1999-2000

Soccer - World Cup and Track & Field. Soccer team and Jackie Joyner Kersee. No action. Athletic wear with white background. Jewelry - weddings rings, necklaces and earrings.

May/April 2000

Tennis. Anna Kournikova. No action. Athletic wear - tennis dress. Jewelry - bracelet.

May/June 2000

Basketball - WNBA & NBA. Lisa Leslie and Shaquille O'Neal. No action. Swimwear - Leslie wearing a bikini on a beach. Jewelry - ring and earrings.

July/August 2000

Mountain boarding. No action. Athletic wear.

September/October 2000

Track and Field. Marion Jones. No action. Athletic wear but also wearing angel wings and is barefoot and standing in glitter. Jewelry - bracelet, wedding ring and earrings.

COVERAGE OF FEMALE ATHLETES IN WOMEN'S SPORTS MAGAZINES: A CONTENT ANALYSIS

Conde Nast Women's Sports & Fitness
Twenty-two issues:

January 1998
Surfing. No action - sitting on surf board. Swimwear.

February 1998
No sport. No action. Woman in swimwear.

March 1998
No sport. No action. Woman in swimwear.

April 1998
Beach volleyball. Gabrielle Reece. No action. Swimwear. Jewelry - wedding ring.

May 1998
Outdoorswoman. No action. Wearing sports bra.

June 1998
Tennis. Anna Kournikova. No action. Wearing sports bra & spandex shorts. Jewelry - earrings.

July/August 1998
No sport. No action - holding surfboard. Woman in swimwear.

September/October 1998
No sport. No action. Woman in jacket and short shorts.

November/December 1998
No sport. No action - holding snowboard. Woman in jacket & pants.

January/February 1999
No sport. No action - holding snorkeling mask. Woman in swimwear.

March/April 1999
Ice skating. Michele Kwan. No action - holding one skate. Casual clothing - shirt with string tops and bare midriff. Jewelry - necklace.

May/June 1999
Beach volleyball. Gabrielle Reece. No action - holding volleyball. Swimwear. Jewelry - wedding ring.

July/August 1999
Surfing. No action. Swimwear.

September/October 1999
Model climbing Kilimanjaro. Christy Turlington. No action. Casual clothing with top that bares midriff and short jean shorts.

November/December 1999
Model/Actress Brooke Shields in Egypt. No action. Casual clothing with small top & pants. Jewelry - bracelets.

January/February 2000
No sport. No action - holding boogie board. Woman in swimwear.

March 2000
Soccer. Mia Hamm. No action. Casual dress with small shirt and shorts. Jewelry - earrings.

April 2000
Actress Sarah Wynter getting fit. No action. Casual clothing with small top baring midriff and pants/shorts.

May 2000
Beach volleyball. Gabrielle Reece. No action. Swimwear.

June 2000
No sport. No action - holding kayak. Woman in swimwear.

July/August 2000
No sport. No action - holding surfboard. Woman in swimwear.

September 2000
Track and Field. Marion Jones. No action. Athletic wear - sports bra and spandex shorts. Jewelry - wedding band, earrings, necklace, bracelet.

Did women listen to news?

A critical examination of landmark radio audience research

(1935-1948)

Submission to the Commission on the Status of Women

2003 AEJMC annual convention

Stacy Spaulding
Ph.D. student, University of Maryland

Did women listen to news?
A critical examination of landmark radio audience research (1935-1948)

This paper critically analyzes the generalizations researchers made about women's program preferences and the quantitative data used to support these assumptions. This research suggests that in analyzing their own data, researchers were blinded by pre-conceived notions of what programs women preferred. In particular, early research published in 1935 in *The Psychology of Radio* boldly called discrimination against women's voices a product of societal prejudice, but failed to break with conventional wisdom about what programs women actually enjoyed listening to. Later research by Paul Lazarsfeld confirmed that women were a significant portion of the audience, but also perpetuated the myth that women were not interested in news or current events though the data showed otherwise.

Introduction

In 1926, when radio was still in its infancy, a letter to the magazine *Radio Broadcast* sparked a debate that would last for decades. Were women's voices suitable for radio? The letter reported the results of a poll of 5,000 WJZ listeners in New York that reportedly found that male voices were preferred nearly 100 to 1. Said WJZ manager Charles B. Popenoe:

> It is difficult to say why the public should be so unanimous about it. One reason may be that most receiving sets do not reproduce perfectly the high notes. A man's voice 'takes' better. It has more volume. Then, announcers cover sporting events, shows, concerts, operas and big public meetings. Men are naturally better fitted for the average assignment of the broadcast announcer.[1]

It is difficult to know just how reliable the survey was. The original column in which the results were reported contains no clues as to how the research was performed. Some historians doubt the legitimacy of the poll. Michelle Hilmes, author of the book *Radio Voices* and a cultural history of broadcasting titled *Only Connect*, refers to the survey results as "somewhat suspect" and says the results "would continue to be reported as fact and would act as a barrier to women in radio, except in daytime shows directed at female audiences."[2] *Invisible Stars* author Donna Halper believes that the survey was not a reliable indication of audience preferences, since in the 1920s concepts of the audience and audience research were not well defined. Halper hypothesizes that the survey was not a scientific sample of listeners, but a collection of letters from mostly male "active" listeners who were very vocal about what they liked and disliked. These were the listeners most likely to write into the station, she says.[3]

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[1] John Wallace, "Men vs. Women Announcers," *Radio Broadcast*, November 1926, 44-45.

[2] Michele Hilmes, *Only Connect: A Cultural History of Broadcasting in the United States* (Belmont: Wadsworth, 2002), 48.

As radio gained legitimacy, so did audience research. But early attempts to measure the audience of a particular program were neither sophisticated nor scientific. Some stations offered free items to listeners who wrote to the station, a tactic that was likely to generate thousands of letters, but not a reliable sample of listeners. Telephone interviews were also widely used, but this method was not able to capture the thousands of radio listeners who did not own telephones. The ability to cull a random or representative sample was not of great importance to early researchers focused on the commercial applications of the findings. "It is assumed that the bias inherent in each method is not of great importance," wrote one researcher in 1934.[4]

In 1935 when *The Psychology of Radio* by Hadley Cantril was published, it represented the "first attempt on the part of psychologists to map out from their own point of view the new mental world created by radio."[5] It also marked the beginning of an era of research that was more methodologically sound in its conceptualization, execution and analysis. In 1937, the Rockefeller Foundation established the Office of Radio Research at Princeton University, through which Cantril, Paul Lazarsfeld, Frank Stanton and others would conduct landmark studies of radio audiences.[6]

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[3] Donna Halper, *Invisible Stars: A Social History of Women in American Broadcasting* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2001), 42.
[4] Frederick H. Lumley, "Synopsis of Methods," in *Measurement in Radio* (Columbus: The Ohio State University, 1934), 227-232. Reprinted in Lawrence W. Lichty and Malachi C. Topping, *American Broadcasting: A Source Book on the History of Radio and Television* (New York: Hastings House, 1975), 479-483.
[5] Hadley Cantril and Gordon W. Allport, *The Psychology of Radio* (New York: Harper, 1935), vii.
[6] Everett M. Rogers, *A History of Communication Study* (New York: The Free Press, 1994), 265.

Historian Susan Douglas examined several of these early studies in a broad context for her book *Listening In.* Concerning women, she concluded that these researchers "neglected the female audience."[7] That is, researchers such as Paul Lazarsfeld failed to pursue the cultural contradictions inherent in radio programs. Douglas examined early radio studies such as Cantril's *The Psychology of Radio,* along with Lazarsfeld's *Radio and the Printed Page* and *Radio Research 1941.* In describing "the invention of the audience," Douglas analyzes the contributions Hadley Cantril, Herta Herzog, Paul Lazarsfeld, Frank Stanton and early ratings services made to radio research in terms of gender, class, and the evolution of audience into commodity.

This study initially set out to add to Douglas' interpretation by examining a broader range of these early radio studies to cull from them a more specific picture of the female audience. However in pursuing that question, this project was sidetracked into critically analyzing the generalizations researchers made about women's program preferences—specifically their disregard for news—and the quantitative data used to support these assumptions. This research suggests that in analyzing their own data, researchers were blinded by pre-conceived notions of what programs women preferred. In particular, early research published in 1935 in *The Psychology of Radio* boldly called discrimination against women's voices a product of societal prejudice, but failed to break with conventional wisdom about what programs women actually enjoyed listening to. Later research by Paul Lazarsfeld confirmed that women were a significant portion of the audience, but also perpetuated the myth that women were not interested in news or current events though the data showed otherwise.

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[7] Susan J. Douglas, *Listening In: Radio and the American Imagination* (New York: Times Books Random House, 1999), 148.

This paper will first outline the historical background pertinent to the subject and then examine the first landmark study in radio research: *The Psychology of Radio* by Hadley Cantril and Gordon W. Allport. This paper will then describe the emergence of Paul Lazarsfeld and the Office of Radio Research, and an examination will follow of Lazarsfeld's substantial body of book-length studies of the radio audience. These works include *Radio and the Printed Page* (1940), *Radio Research 1941*, *The People Look at Radio* (1946), *Radio Listening in America: The People Look at Radio—Again* (1948).[8]

Historical Background

The subject of women's voices wasn't the only debate touched off by the magazine *Radio Broadcast*. A 1925 column lamented the dichotomy of programs considered appropriate for women and men. For decades after the birth of radio, programs would be divided into "male" and "female." Programs deemed to have a mostly male audience included commentary, news and sports; women's programs included homemaking, music and dramatic serials.

Radio Broadcast columnist Kingsley Welles hated this dualistic approach. In a 1925 column titled "Do Women Know What They Want in Radio Programs?" Welles praised a Cambridge forum in which a graduate called for talks "of a non-domestic character" for female audience members. In a call for listeners to express their own views, 80 percent of the letters sided with the graduate, Welles said:

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[8] It must be noted here that this paper did initially intend to analyze Herta Herzog's path-breaking analysis of women audience members printed in Paul F. Lazarsfeld and Frank N. Stanton, *Radio Research 1942-1943* (New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1944). However, because this paper critically analyzes the assumptions researchers attached to quantitative data, Herzog's qualitative analysis was deemed outside of the argument. Other scholars have done work in this area, however: Douglas, *Listening In*. Andy Ruddock, *Understanding Audiences: Theory and Method* (London: Sage, 2001). Charlotte Brunsdon, *The Feminist, the Housewife and the Soap Opera* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000).

> Cookery, child welfare, and household management talks were not wanted. The general cry was: 'Take us out of the kitchen and take us out of ourselves!' The letter writers wanted talks on music, literature, travel, women's movements, etc., with an occasional fashion talk or humorous (sic.) reading.[9]

As noted with the Popenoe survey of WJZ listeners, a call for letters is by no means a reliable audience sample. But what is notable is that as early as 1925 some women were speaking out against so-called women's programs. In her column, Welles called for better women's programming at American radio stations:

> Almost without exception American broadcast stations, when they have a program for women, have limited it to the obvious domestic things. No broadcaster has had the courage or the intelligence to arrange a program to appeal to the intelligence of a woman. One wonders whether this failure is due to a belief that it would be useless to make the attempt or because the program designers simply fail to appreciate the necessity.[10]

As early as the 1920s, the female audience became a powerful draw for advertisers who realized that women made the majority of purchasing decisions. However it is not known if early radio executives ever seriously considered the power and influence of the female audience when it came to programming. In the book *Radio: The Fifth Estate,* published in 1946 as a textbook for use with NBC's Northwestern University Summer Radio Institute, radio pioneer Judith Carey Waller wrote that women's programs were frequently "unwanted children—there to fill the air until something better came along."[11] They were always "a matter for perennial discussion and controversy" by male executives who considered women's preferences as "more than slightly mysterious."[12] In 1932 a female radio executive, NBC's director of commercial programming Bertha Brainerd, argued that women represented radio's primary sales audience. In a memo to the head of NBC's sales division objecting to the practice of setting daytime ad rates lower than prime time rates, Brainerd said she was "looking forward to the day when you and the sponsors realize that the daytime hours are our most important selling times."[13]

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[9] Kingsley Welles, "Do Women Know What They Want in Radio Programs?," *Radio Broadcast*, November 1925.
[10] Ibid.
[11] Judith Carey Waller, *Radio: The Fifth Estate* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1946), 142.

Many early programming plans assumed women would be the primary audience, however women were never recognized as such, writes historian Michelle Hilmes in her book *Radio Voices*.[14] Radio at this time was fighting a battle of definition, she writes. Was radio a public institution or a commercial one? Radio was dependent on selling a product to an economic base of female audience members. But broadcasters also had to convince regulators that they existed to serve the public, not just sell a product. Thus, radio's "mass/private/feminine base constantly threatened to overwhelm its 'high'/public/masculine function."[15]

Hilmes argues that women were the "preferred, yet feared, buying audience."[16] Women were the primary purchasers for the home and made up a majority of the audience, but their identification with popular culture "threatened to undermine radio's high-culture image."[17] As this paper will show, even noted researchers—credited with creating the field of mass communication research—relied on pre-conceived notions of women's preferences for soaps over news. Thus, these researchers uncritically identified women as low-culture consumers, even when their own data showed otherwise. This class-based concern over low versus high culture characterized early radio research, even as this research pioneered new, more statistically sound methods of data gathering.

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[12] Ibid., 141.
[13] Memorandum from Bertha Brainard to Roy C. Witmer, August 23, 1932, in Michele Hilmes, *Radio Voices: American Broadcasting, 1922-1952* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 139.
[14] Ibid., 147.
[15] Ibid., 153.
[16] Ibid., xviii.
[17] Ibid., 18.

The Psychology of Radio

Published in 1935, Hadley Cantril and Gordon W. Allport's *Psychology of Radio* represented an important landmark in the beginning of radio research. The study regarded radio as a "significant social problem" for psychologists because of its feared potential for social control.[18] The authors wrote that their data could ultimately help legislators determine how best to control radio for social good:

> Since the psychology of radio is the psychology of the listener and since the listener is also a citizen, an understanding of his tastes and habits and a knowledge of the way radio affects his everyday life are prerequisite to an intelligent determination of how this medium should be controlled.[19]

The study is divided into three parts. Part I is an analysis of general psychological and cultural factors that influence radio programs and listener response. This section of the book presents an impressive portrait of what radio was at this time and how it came to be. It includes an analysis of the laws governing broadcasting, a portrait of how programs are put together, and a detailed account of the role of the advertiser. Part II reports the results of five laboratory experiments. The experiments are original and varied, and include a study that specifically addresses audience prejudice towards women's voices. Part III is a summary of findings for laypeople and professional broadcasters.

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[18] Cantril and Allport, *The Psychology of Radio*, vii.
[19] Ibid., viii.

Though the research seems thorough, the picture of women listeners that emerges from this book is contradictory. At first, the research seems groundbreaking. The authors boldly call attention to discrimination: In an experiment concerning why audiences seemed to prefer male voice over female voices, the authors showed that pre-existing prejudice played a large part in listener preference.

In this experiment, a preliminary questionnaire of a representative sample of 80 radio listeners, 95 percent reported that they preferred men's voices. In the course of the actual experiment, Cantril and Allport found that listeners preferred women's voices for certain types of readings: poetry or abstract reflective material, for example. Listeners even rated women's voices as more attractive, though men's voices were judged to be more natural and persuasive. Women announcers who seemed like "high-pressure saleswomen" or whose voices seemed "put-on" were not appreciated. This led Cantril and Allport to conclude that women should be entitled to more announcing work than they received at the time in the areas of poetry and reflective readings. They also concluded that the preference for women with contralto voices had little to do with microphone technology:

> Women whose voice and speech create an impression of cultivation and refinement are not ordinarily popular. This observation suggests a deeper factor in the public's attitude. Radio, it seems, is regarded above all else as a medium of entertainment, on the level of vaudeville and the music hall. By ingrained tradition feminine refinement has no place in variety shows.[20]

But the research does have shortcomings. The laboratory experiment did not replicate actual radio listening conditions. For example, instead of listening to real broadcasts, participants in the study listened as ten speakers from a local college (five men and five women) read copy into a microphone in a separate room.[21] However, the results are heartening. The authors do not shy away from calling attention to conflicting statements given by the participants.

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[20] Ibid., 137.

But in concluding the study, the authors still put the burden on women to learn how to change their voices and their status in society:

> At some future date when they have learned better to adapt their voices to the requirements of straight broadcasting, and have battled a little longer against economic and social prejudice, they may also be successful as announcers.[22]

Cantril and Allport are no doubt trying to be objective and fair. They are to be credited for making a substantial claim in reporting the results of this experiment: that societal prejudice, not microphone technology, accounts for listener preferences for male voices. The authors also claim that radio actresses should indeed receive more work in certain areas that include poetry readings.

But their findings concerning women's program preferences are not so encouraging. The researchers write that women enjoy symphonies, operas, dance orchestras, short stories, literature, organ music, vocal artists, new jazz songs, dance music, classical music, poetry, educational talks, church music, sermons, and "of course, fashion reports and recipes." Meanwhile, men are said to enjoy sports, business news, national policy talks, detective stories and talks on engineering, physics or chemistry. "Men even prefer advertisements to fashion reports," write the authors.[23]

This analysis gives the impression that men's and women's tastes are wildly different. However, a closer look at the data (see Table 1) gives a very different picture.

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[21] Ibid., 129-130.
[22] Ibid., 138.
[23] Ibid., 94.

In actuality, men's and women's tastes overlapped a great deal. Five types of programs rank among the top ten preferred programs for all men and women: symphonies, old song favorites, dance orchestras, news, and humorists. The main difference between men's and women's preferences is not the prevalence of so-called women's programs, but men's enthusiasm for sports. Half of men's top ten ranked programs were sports oriented, including football, boxing, baseball and hockey.

Table 1. Men's and women's rank order of radio program preferences.
Taken from *The Psychology of Radio*, 1935. Table XII and XIII, p. 91-92.
Only top 10 of the 42 ranked programs are reproduced here.

Rank	**Total men**	**Total women**
1	Football	Symphonies
2	Sports	Old song favorites
3	Old song favorites	Dance orchestras
4	Boxing	Drama
5	News events	Operas
6	Baseball	News events
7	Humorists	Short stories
8	Dance Orchestras	Humorists
9	Hockey	Literature
10	Symphonies	Organ music

In fact, of the programs the authors highlighted as "women's favorites," only three were in women's top-ten ranked list. Most were much lower on the list: dance music ranked 20th, classical music ranked 21st, poetry ranked 24th, church music ranked 27th, sermons ranked 34th. Most surprisingly, fashion reports ranked 23rd and recipes ranked 28th.[24] Likewise, the authors seemed to brand many music programs as women's programs, but failed to mention that men also ranked music programs highly.

It must also be noted that both men and women report that they enjoy listening to news. Data from Table 1 shows that men ranked news as fifth, and similarly women ranked it sixth; however women's preference was overlooked in the researchers' narrative summary.[25] This picture is contradictory to the authors' hopes of what radio could do for women. Early in the book, they hope that "the housewife may find the loud-speaker more entertaining than the back fence as her mind becomes occupied with affairs of the outside world rather than with those of her neighbors."[26]

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[24] Ibid.

Cantril and Allport's data show that radio news is highly attractive to women. Of the women who answered Cantril and Allport's research questionnaire, 72 percent reported that they preferred listening to news events on the radio rather than reading about them in the newspaper. And 91 percent reported that they preferred listening to a speech on the radio rather than reading it in the newspaper.[27] Thus, it seems odd that researchers, in hoping that housewives would become more concerned with national and world affairs, would overlook a clear and resounding statement from women that they enjoyed and even preferred radio news to other programs and other mediums of news delivery. The researchers missed an important opportunity here to break with conventional wisdom about what women wanted. The misconception that women did not appreciate news as much as household hints and cooking shows would unfortunately thrive in future radio research headed by perhaps the most important scholar to shape mass communication research: Paul Lazarsfeld.

The Office of Radio Research

Two years after the publication of *The Psychology of Radio*, the Radio Research Project was established at Princeton University. It was funded by the Rockefeller

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[25] Ibid., Table XII and XIII, 91-94.
[26] Ibid., 24.
[27] Ibid., 99.

Foundation and directed by Cantril, Lazarsfeld, and Frank Stanton of CBS.[28] The origins for the project came from an offhand remark by John D. Rockefeller, Jr., who one day wondered if something might be done to improve the quality of radio programs. The project was also inspired by a Rockefeller Foundation official's reading of *The Psychology of Radio.*[29]

Lazarsfeld became director of the project, which was credited with creating the field of mass communication research.[30] Lazarsfeld's own work at the bureau is lauded for initiating the mass media effects research tradition, advancing survey methodology and creating the prototype of the university research institute.[31] The project was renamed the Bureau of Applied Social Research in 1944 when Rockefeller Foundation funding ended. Radio research continued as one branch within the bureau, located at Columbia University.[32] Out of both of these projects came a number of book-length studies on radio authored by Lazarsfeld and co-authored by a variety of other researchers.

Initially, these studies confirm that women did make up a significant segment of the audience. Research published in 1940 found that in rural areas, women spent more time listening to radio than men.[33] This finding was also true in 1946 of women generally.[34] In a 1941 survey of 93 women, three-quarters remembered at least one instance in which they had been influenced by radio in their purchasing decisions. Of these women, over half said they tried a new product because they wanted to support a radio program.[35]

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[28] Rogers, *A History of Communication Study*, 256.
[29] Ibid., 267.
[30] David L. Sills, "Paul F. Lazarsfeld: 1901-1976," in *Bibliographical Memoirs* (Washington D.C.: National Academy Press, 1987). Quoted in Rogers, *A History of Communication Study*, 279.
[31] Rogers, *A History of Communication Study*, 308-309.
[32] Ibid., 291.
[33] Paul F. Lazarsfeld, *Radio and the Printed Page* (New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1940), 225.
[34] Columbia University, *The People Look at Radio* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1946), 97, 98.

Research published in *Radio Listening in America* showed that women—always considered daytime listeners—did not turn off the radio when prime-time programs and so-called men's programs came on in the evening:

> We can summarize our findings this way: A radio fan in the morning is one in the afternoon and evening as well. Because of their psychological characteristics, their time schedules, and their lack of competing interests, women who are heavy listeners at one period of the day will tend to be radio fans throughout the day.[36]

Gender however, was not a consistent unit of analysis in any of this research. The most consistent unit of analysis was that of class and education. The majority of this research was elitist in nature with aims of discovering how to "build audiences for serious broadcasts among people on lower cultural levels."[37] This research, performed in the late 1930s and early 1940s, sought to understand advantages and limitations of using radio for communication of "serious ideas" as Europe and the world teetered on the brink of war.

These themes resonated with Lazarsfeld's former life in Vienna where he was a member of the Socialist Democratic Party of Austria. Lazarsfeld and his colleagues sought to improve conditions for the working class, hoping to encourage them to spend less leisure time carousing and more time reading, listening to serious music and attending lectures. But, as historian Susan Douglas has written, these pursuits were a contradiction in that they were "favored by the educated bourgeoisie, the very class

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[35] Paul F. Lazarsfeld and Frank N. Stanton, *Radio Research* (New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1941), 270-272.

[36] Paul F. Lazarsfeld and Patricia L. Kendall, *Radio Listening in America* (New York: Prentice-Hall, 1948), 16.

[37] Lazarsfeld, *Radio and the Printed Page*, xiv.

Lazarsfeld and his comrades disdained."[38] These contradictions "crossed the Atlantic with Lazarsfeld and left their mark on radio research and on conceptions of the radio audience."[39]

Lazarsfeld's research into "serious" listening and "lowbrow" programs imposes a positive/negative valuation to the research that is inherently contradictory. Lazarsfeld and his colleagues took it for granted "those from the lower levels needed to be put under the microscope but not those from the same educational and economic level as the interviewers themselves."[40] Unfortunately, this not only pre-determined the outcome of the research, but also meant that subtler patterns, meanings and interpretations were likely to be overlooked.

In *Radio and the Printed Page,* Lazarsfeld states that "programs which can be called 'lowbrow' are mainly favored by people on lower cultural levels,"[41] and that these programs "which are definitely preferred by people lower in the cultural scale, are those which can be characterized as of definitely bad taste."[42] The book clearly advocates the concept of "audience building," or intentionally creating the conditions that facilitate an audience member's acceptance of a "serious" broadcast.[43] Admittedly, this concept has "ulterior social motives," wrote Lazarsfeld. It was tied to helping radio listeners read more books, listen to more "serious" music, and in general raise the cultural level of the audience.[44]

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[38] Douglas, *Listening In*, 127.
[39] Ibid., 128.
[40] Ibid., 143.
[41] Lazarsfeld, *Radio and the Printed Page*, 21.
[42] Ibid., 23.
[43] Ibid., 118-128.
[44] Ibid., 128-132.

In discussing the techniques of audience building, Lazarsfeld relied on several examples involving women as audience members. He cited a random sample of 600 women of whom two-thirds had no idea that a certain child-guidance program existed, which showed "how much is still to be done about the most elementary step of audience building—making people aware of the programs available."[45] Another survey of 100 women in Illinois generated a list of 123 educational programs that the women knew of, and 92 that they regularly listened to. But only five women knew the specific program, Chicago Round Table.[46] Finally, Lazarsfeld cited a home economics program broadcast daily in Iowa that in one year fulfilled 150,000 requests for scripts; however a survey revealed that only 36 percent of the women in the area had ever heard of the program.[47]

Taken separately, these individual studies are innocuous. It could be that women, as the majority of the radio audience and commonly thought to have the daytime hours free for listening, were the easiest to study. But these examples of Lazarsfeld's conception of "audience building," taken together, help create the impression that women are the prime "uneducated" audience of which Lazarsfeld is trying to elevate. As Cantril and Allport did before him, Lazarsfeld fell into the erroneous belief that women were not appreciative of serious programs when survey data clearly showed otherwise.

Data that showed women did enjoy serious programming was abundant in Lazarsfeld's *Radio Listening in America: The People Look at Radio—Again* published in 1948. Conceived as a periodic survey of people's attitudes toward radio, the book is a follow up to Lazarsfeld's *The People Look at Radio* published two years earlier. Like previous works, this study again focuses on issues of class and education in the radio audience, and advocates keeping the "volume of educational broadcasts slightly above what the masses want" in order to raise the general cultural level of the radio audience.[48]

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[45] Ibid., 122.
[46] Ibid., 123.
[47] Ibid., 124.

But this book, more than any other, offers an inconsistent picture of female audience members. The analysis of women's habits is flawed and relies on pre-conceived notions. The study's conclusions are easily refuted by looking at the study's own data. For example, in the book's first chapter the authors note that the radio audience had no outstanding characteristics, except for one:

> During the day most men are at work, and the large majority of married women are at home. Women, then, can more easily listen to the radio during the day, and they usually do. Because of this, one might modify the previous statements by saying that a sex difference is the outstanding characteristic of the radio audience.[49]

On first reading, this finding seems to support the dichotomy of men's and women's programs. Women listen during the day, when women's programs are on. But do they listen *because* of these programs? Apparently not, since in the very next sentence Lazarsfeld wrote that the sex of the audience differs at certain times only because of "time schedules of men and women," not because of "any inherent appeals or characteristics of the medium."[50] Women, it would seem, listened to daytime radio out of convenience, not because of any special distinctions of so-called women's programming. Lazarsfeld also wrote that there was "no sex difference in demand for serious programs,"[51] and a data summary even showed that in the daytime and evening hours women overwhelmingly preferred news to other types of programs.[52] Nevertheless, he also claimed:

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[48] Lazarsfeld and Kendall, *Radio Listening in America*, 42.
[49] Ibid., 14.
[50] Ibid.
[51] Ibid., 40-41.

> The average American woman, just like American youth, is not interested in current affairs. This fact has been discovered in so many areas of behavior that we are not surprised to find it reflected also in program preferences. And it is indeed reflected, for twice as many men like discussions of public issues and considerably more men are interested in evening news broadcasts.[53]

This generalization, however, does not adequately represent Lazarsfeld's own data (see Table 2). Lazarsfeld's assertion that men listen to more news than women is true only for audience members who spend less than one hour listening to the radio in the evening. However, this generalization minimizes women's actual interest in news. As Table 2 shows, the greater amounts of radio that women listened to, the higher they ranked news and public discussions. And though news broadcasts are listed under "programs preferred by men," a careful reading of the statistics shows that news broadcasts were the most popular type of program for all groups of women. (This finding is unchanged from the original survey, published in 1946. Both men and women reported that they listened to news more often than any other program during both daytime and evening hours.[54])

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[52] Ibid., 21, table 13.
[53] Ibid., 27.
[54] University, *The People Look at Radio*, 103, 133, 135, 138-139.

Table 2. Evening program preferences according to sex and amount of evening listening

Taken from *Radio Listening in America*, 1948. Appendix C, Table 15, p. 137

	Less than 1 hour		*1-3 hours*		*3 or more hours*	
Programs preferred by women	*Men*	*Women*	*Men*	*Women*	*Men*	*Women*
Quiz and audience participation	37%	40%	56%	62%	65%	71%
Complete dramas	25	28	43	53	58	64
Semiclassical music	23	27	31	37	35	42
Programs preferred by men						
News broadcasts	70	55	81	74	87	78
Comedy programs	43	32	68	62	73	72
Discussions of public issues	46	23	52	42	57	44
Sports programs	40	10	52	16	59	30
Hillbilly and western music	22	19	31	24	32	25

This data does not, as Lazarsfeld wrote, show that women are not interested in current affairs and that "considerably more men are interested in evening news broadcasts."[55] Lazarsfeld himself wrote that according to his own findings in this study there was "no sex difference in demand for serious programs."[56]

The cause for this contradiction is not apparent in the study. But a second table of data in the book also confirms that women did prefer news. This data (see Table 3) shows that during the daytime, women listened to news and public issues programming at either the same or greater rates than men. The data shows that a greater percentage of women preferred news over homemaking programs and soap operas. This table also shows that these preferences remained more or less constant between the 1947 and 1945 surveys that Lazarsfeld's *Radio Listening in America* and *The People Look at Radio* are based on.

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[55] Lazarsfeld and Kendall, *Radio Listening in America*, 27.
[56] Ibid., 40-41.

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Table 3. The constancy of program preferences (1947 compared with 1945)

Taken from *Radio Listening in America*, 1948. Table 13, p. 21

	Daytime preferences: Men		*Daytime preferences: Women*		*Evening preferences: both sexes*	
	1945	*1947*	*1945*	*1947*	*1945*	*1947*
News broadcasts	65%	61%	76%	71%	76%	74%
Comedy programs	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	54	59
Popular and dance music	15	23	35	39	42	49
Talks or discussions about public issues	22	19	21	22	40	44
Classical music	12	11	23	20	32	30
Religious Broadcasts	19	22	35	41	20	21
Serial dramas	7	6	37	33	n/a	n/a
Farm talks	13	16	12	13	n/a	n/a
Homemaking programs	5	5	44	48	n/a	n/a
Livestock/grain reports	14	17	6	10	n/a	n/a

It is also important to note here that considerably more women preferred news broadcasts to homemaking programs, and that these numbers showed relatively little change between 1945 and 1947. This preference is a major one: 71% of women preferred news broadcasts in 1947 compared to 48% who preferred homemaking programs. This is a difference of 23%. This table shows that even fewer women preferred daytime soap operas: only 33%. Surely this shows again that Lazarsfeld is mistaken in claiming that women are interested in homemaking programs and soaps to the exclusion of news broadcasts.

In his eagerness to analyze radio according to class and education levels, Lazarsfeld failed to prevent preconceived notions of women's preferences from contaminating his analysis: his data shows that his generalizations of women's preferences are misconstrued. What is even more confusing is the inconsistency of this falsehood with the overall aims of the research. If the purpose of these studies was to discover a way to elevate audience tastes, and if women were blamed for not having

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"serious" tastes, why not study women's programming in some depth? Why not propose changes? Why limit the analysis to class and education levels?

Conclusion

Though Lazarsfeld and other researchers generally believed that women were not interested in current affairs, this paper has argued that their own data showed women consistently ranked news programs among their favorites. If early researchers had seen this, they could have encouraged executives to experiment with women's programming as *Radio Broadcast* columnist Kingsley Welles did in 1926:

> No broadcaster has had the courage or the intelligence to arrange a program to appeal to the intelligence of a woman. One wonders whether this failure is due to a belief that it would be useless to make the attempt or because the program designers simply fail to appreciate the necessity.[57]

This study has also showed that researchers relied on pre-conceived notions of what women wanted, even when their data suggested otherwise. In early research published in 1935 in *The Psychology of Radio,* researchers boldly called attention to discrimination against women's voices, identifying it as a product of societal prejudice. However, this research did not credit women with enjoying news and other programs, did not acknowledge that the majority of men's and women's favorite programs overlapped, and did not state that the principal difference between men's and women's tastes was not women's interest in soaps, recipes and fashion, but men's interests in sports.

Later research headed by Paul Lazarsfeld confirmed that women were a significant portion of the audience, but perpetuated the myth that women were not interested in news or current affairs. Lazarsfeld's own research showed that women had a strong and consistent preference for news programming, a preference that was significantly stronger than their preferences for daytime dramas and household hints.

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[57] Welles, "Do Women Know What They Want in Radio Programs?."

As *The Psychology of Radio* had done, Lazarsfeld's data showed that, with the exception of sports programs, men's and women's tastes overlapped to a great extent. However Lazarsfeld was selective in calling attention to this fact. This is especially apparent in *Radio Listening in America,* where one section of the study claimed there was no great difference in men's and women's tastes, yet another part discredited women's tastes. It is unclear why women's preferences were devalued without further study or elaboration when the overall goal was to lift the cultural taste of the radio audience.

One avenue for further investigation into this discrepancy is Lazarsfeld's dependence on corporate grants to fund his research. Lazarsfeld was well-known for paying the debt from his last study with the grant from the next. He also used corporate grants to fund his academic studies, a technique he termed "Robin Hooding."[58] Lazarsfeld often did research for CBS, NBC and several advertising agencies, using the proceeds to pay for his academic studies. [59] As a result of his dependence on funding, his "correlations were a little too pat," [60] and he may have failed to explore the data fully.

At the time of Lazarsfeld's studies, it was common for advertisers to create programs best suited to selling their products. The programs were then "auditioned" before broadcasting executives, who would suggest changes before going on the air.[61] In this context, of course, the principal concern of an advertiser would be to create a showcase for their products, not to use the airtime for the best possible public service. If any of these women's program advertisers paid Lazarsfeld research fees, then there would be no incentive for bucking the conventional wisdom that women preferred soap operas—a venue for advertising household commodities—instead of "serious" public affairs programming. Unless some entity was willing to pay research fees for Lazarsfeld to investigate women's programs specifically, it may have been unlikely for him to do so on his own.

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[58] Rogers, *A History of Communication Study*, 294.
[59] Douglas, *Listening In*, 139.
[60] Ibid., 143.
[61] Cantril and Allport, *The Psychology of Radio*, 66-68.

Even so, it is disturbing that Lazarsfeld and other researchers showed no recognition of their tendency to rely on conventional wisdom instead of the data they gathered. These researchers are credited with creating an entirely new field of study. Unfortunately, they helped to perpetuate false assumptions regarding women audience members.

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To American Eyes

Cultural Feminist Analysis of an Alternative Representation of Islamic Womanhood

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Abstract

This textual analysis examines the widely circulated Muslim magazine, *Islamic Horizons,* and its construction of Islamic womanhood in the two years surrounding September 11, 2001. Informed by cultural feminist theory, this analysis locates sex separation as a conversion strategy. The magazine's representation of Islamic womanhood mirrored a nostalgic American femininity characterized by modesty and moral superiority, modernizing it with contemporary acknowledgement of diversity and intellectual individualism. Its portrayal of Islamic womanhood did not shift markedly after the September 11 attacks.

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As a post-September 11 America turned its attention toward ferreting out Osama bin Laden, the primary suspect in instigating the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center, and toward liberating Afghanistan, the predominantly Muslim country in which bin Laden was thought to have taken refuge, Muslim women became the symbol of Islamic oppression. As Muslim images appeared in American media, women were the unseen victims; on their cloaked bodies and veiled faces Islam was constructed as being typified by the Taliban, a fundamentalist sect that denied basic rights to women. Yet, Islam counts women among its religious adherents. And while the United States waged its war on terrorism, Islam continued to gather willing women converts, or reverts, from around the world, including from within the United States.

Islamic Horizons, an English-language publication of the Islamic Society of North America, carries news from across the world and around the United States in order to promote Islam to an American audience. This analysis is a qualitative investigation into women's representation in this magazine's portrayal of Islam and asks whether the portrayal of women changed in the wake of September 11, 2001. Two years of *Islamic Horizons* was examined to determine the construction of Muslim womanhood for an American audience. To analyze sex difference as well as how Muslim women were (re)defined in a manner counter to mainstream media portrayal, this study utilizes cultural feminism as its theoretical perspective in order to ask, woman to woman, what appeals were being made.

Literature Review

In her critical assessment of feminist media studies, researcher Zoonen (1994) noted that images of women have been an important research emphasis from the beginning. "Initially the new themes that feminist media scholars added to the agenda of communication research were the stereotypical images of women in the media and the effects of these images on the audience" (p. 16). The bulk of 1970's and early 1980's feminist media research was built around image analysis (see Butler 1975; Courtney & Lockeretz 1971; Goffman 1976; Pingree, Hawkins, Butler & Paisley 1976; Tuchman, Daniels & Benet 1978). By the mid-1980's, feminist media theory was coming of age with self-reflexive assessments of the field (see Dervin 1987; *Journal of Communication Inquiry* 1987; Rakow 1986; Steeves 1987).

In a news study, Brown and Gardetto (2000) urged that, in addition to empirical research on women's representation begun in the 1970's, cultural critical studies be augmented "to clarify if and how actual women are caught in a web of ideological frameworks that fail to capture the particular woman's seemingly incongruous subject position or that seek to place her firmly as 'woman' rather than as 'person'" (p. 44).

Cultural feminism

During the "second wave" of feminism that surged into the 1970's, cultural feminism, a separatist strain of feminism, reemerged in the United States alongside other feminisms. Cirksena and Cuklanz (1992) noted that cultural feminism's association with the body, both direct and symbolic, "has been criticized for its tendency toward abstraction and inaccessibility" (p. 36). Yet, they predicted, "Cultural feminist work in communication studies will most likely continue to elaborate the processes through which the symbolic realm has constructed and made real certain ways of understanding and thinking about gender" (p. 37).

Cultural feminists seek a women's culture within patriarchal society in order to nurture a separate set of female values and practices. By equating women positively with their gendered traits, "cultural feminists wish to establish a female standard of sexuality" (Echols, 1983, p. 454). "[G]rounded securely and unambiguously on the concept of the essential female" (Alcoff, 1997, p. 332), cultural feminist theory does not question femininity or its positioning in opposition to masculinity. In fact, Echols (1984) noted that cultural feminism was "committed to preserving rather than challenging gender differences" (p. 51). Recognizing that patriarchy has described femininity in restrictive terms in order to define masculinity as normal and dominant, cultural feminists co-opt descriptors of femaleness in order to imbue them with women-defined positive meaning that goes beyond equality to claim the moral high ground for women.

Women's culture is typically not perceived as a threat by the dominant culture, which indeed may lend implicit support. Gathering women to talk and to reexamine sexuality and values is in itself an empowering strategy; however, it is absent the radical nature such a strategy might otherwise imply, since both actually and symbolically the women's culture is dependent on the male-defined media and culture in which it is embedded. Feminist critic Mohanty (2000) noted that when women are "constituted as a coherent group, sexual difference becomes coterminous with female subordination," (p. 62) deadlocking "revolutionary struggles into binary structures" with women being "powerless, unified groups" (p. 68). She responded to the theoretical assumption she posited as a question that "surely the implication is that the accession to power of women as a group is sufficient to dismantle the existing organization or relations? But women as a group are not in some sense essentially superior or infallible" (p. 68). Therefore, cultural feminist strategy is a transition presented as an ideal. Mohanty (2000) noted, "It is only by understanding the *contradictions* inherent in women's location within various structures that effective political action and challenges can be devised" (p. 64).

Women on the cover

The well worn American lexicon of women as magazine cover art was codified with the emergence of mass circulation magazines. From the representation of ideals such as justice to the portrayal of social types such as the flapper, images of women on magazines became institutionalized in the popular imagination, with the images serving as trendsetters, role models, and salesgirls for the magazines, their products, and their lifestyles. Magazine historian Kitch (2001) charted the emergence of females onto and their siren calls into the magazines, including the "Fisher girl," a popular image by illustrator Harrison Fisher, which was "somehow demure and sensual at the same time" (p. 14). While tracing the emergence of stereotypes in the construction of a new American womanhood, Kitch recognized that, in addition to the mass circulation magazines that fueled the identity of a mass culture, alternative magazines played a role. Targeting niche populations often ignored by mainstream media, including racial and ethnic minorities, these magazines used "imagery that both challenged and reinforced the stereotypes in mainstream media" (p. 15). In her discussion of the *Crisis*, an early and influential African-American magazine, Kitch examined the cover photography of black women, noting that "much cover imagery of the *Crisis* replicated the various 'girls' of the era's white popular culture, acknowledging what were quickly becoming national standards for women's beauty" (p. 93). Since the magazine advocated values such as education, covers of the *Crisis* showed of African-American women as graduates. Yet, the covers depicted light-skinned women. Noting that "the covers of the Crisis offered a unique view of womanhood by providing the first major media forum for positive representations of African Americans," Kitch observed that the "'whiteness' of these figures, however, sent female readers a disempowering message as well . . . " (p. 99).

Muslim women

Parameswaran (2001) demonstrated the political sensitivity of cross-cultural interpretations when she contextualized female representations as a process of media globalization in her beauty pageant analysis. In examining a rise of Islamic fundamentalism and its relationship to women's dress codes, another scholar (Reese, 1996), noted that Islamic dress differentiated believers from non-believers and women from men, symbolically linking women to purity and modesty (p. 38). She interviewed Muslim women in America and their views on veiling, finding that "the decision to wear full Islamic dress within a non-Muslim culture plays a significant role in the lives of Muslim women within the U.S." (p. 50). While responses tended to vary with the woman's country of origin, each said that Muslim women should "in principle, cover their bodies entirely, except for faces and hands, during prayer" (p. 48). Three of nine women interviewed said that they wear full Islamic covering while in public, while the others wore casual "yet modest Western clothing without any head covering" (p. 48). Women who wrestled with the dress code differences were generally those from cultures that equated women's dress with family honor. One woman noted that "men often harass women in the streets in Jordan, although this contradicts the teachings of the Qur'an which instructs men to treat women with respect and honor" (p. 48).

Image analyses such as Fullerton (2002) point out that while Muslim women and men are instructed to dress modestly, dress codes vary from culture to culture. Mohanty (2000) noted that women wear the veil for different reasons, such as a conscious identification with a particular group. In an analysis of a 1994 attempt of the French to ban Algerian girls from wearing the veil in public schools, Vivian (1999) argued that the veil became a way of knowing. As a symbol of Islamic cultural difference, the veil came to represent resistance to French national identity (p. 6); it was equated with fundamentalism, and with that, terrorism.

In the emotional aftermath of September 11, 2001, Muslim magazines continued to circulate in the United States, constructing an alternative vision of Islam that countered mainstream media's portrayal of Islamic womanhood. Among these magazines, *Islamic Horizons*, published by the Islamic Society of North America, was a widely circulated English-Language Muslim magazine distributed free to gathering places such as Islamic centers. Therefore, it was a magazine well positioned for alternative image exposure and influence across the nation. How were women represented and what were the appeals this magazine made to American women readers through its construction of Islamic womanhood? Did these portrayals remain consistent from September 2000 through September 2002, or did they undergo a makeover after September 11, 2001?

Discussion

Two years of *Islamic Horizons* was examined – the six issues preceding September 11, 2001, and the six issues following. To determine the construction of

Muslim womanhood for an American audience, these issues were analyzed with in-depth emphasis on the most salient features – covers, photos, lead article packages, and regular departments -- with particular attention on the issues that featured women on the cover.

In the two years surrounding September 11, 2001, women appeared on three *Islamic Horizons* covers. Although not a dominant cover motif, women's faces peered from these magazine covers, demurely smiling from otherwise cloaked heads. The smiles are calm; the eyes gazing straight into those of the reader. A collage on the cover of an issue devoted to Latino Muslims, "the newest and growing part of the Muslim American family" (July/August, 2002), featured faces -- half of which are women -- above the caption, "Changing the Face of Islam in America." The smiling Hispanic-Islamic faces invite the reader into the magazine. The lead article (Sanchez & Galvan, 2002) depicts girls in its accompanying photos, including a photo of a young woman proudly displaying the henna tattoos on her hands. But the central photo (p. 23), the only one not ostensibly posed, depicts four young men sitting in a row on the floor poring studiously over their open books. The primary author, sharing her research through the article, notes, "[M]ost Latino Muslims are college-educated, between the ages of 20 and 30, and female" (p. 24). However, the accompanying photo depicts two proud parents flanking their son. On the page opposite the pull quote noting the female majority of Hispanic converts runs the only Spanish-language story in the magazine, with a photo depicting four young Latino males walking and praying devoutly (p. 25).

The lead photo of "Leading Others to Enlightenment" is of two young Hispanic women studying the Qur'an. Women are pictured in mixed gatherings in the several small pictures, and females are also quoted in the article. Estimating that 40,000 of the 31 million Latinos in the United States are Muslims (Sanchez & Galvan, 2002), the Latino Muslim is still seen as "a novelty." But with the growth of the U.S. Latino population revealed by the 2000 census, Islam recognized the opportunity for da'wah, or missionary work. A portion of the Enlightenment story runs under the head "Empowering Latino Women" (Rivera, 2002, p. 37). Written by the director of a volunteer organization that "serves as a network of women who are dedicated to serving Allah by spreading Islam to all, especially the Spanish-speaking population to the U.S., by working one-on-one with non-Muslim women and by supporting new Muslims in their 'evolution.'" (p. 37). The organization was "formed to address issues affecting female reverts. Its stated mission is to propagate Islam, especially among Hispanic women in the U. S." It has been sponsoring seminars since 1987, since "many Latinas who embrace Islam lack assistance from their Islamic community" (p. 37).

Religious education and conversion, or reversion, are foremost emphases of this magazine as the Islamic society reaches out to those of other backgrounds. The term "revert" is used instead of "convert" to designate Islam as precursor of other religions. The Hispanic Muslim edition is a signal issue for the reversion of disillusioned Catholics. Quotes from Latino Muslims are reprinted from newspapers, with a Los Angeles woman quoted as saying, "I remember getting in trouble in Catholic school for debating things like the concept of original sin at a really young age" (Sanchez & Galvan, 2002, p. 26). A woman from Miami stated, "I always wanted to read the Bible and learn more, but it was all about the catechism. You just have to believe it, not understand it. For me, Islam gave me answers, made sense" (p. 26). Along with these quotes runs an uncaptioned photo of two smiling Hispanic Muslim women, one of whom appeared in the cover collage.

On the cover of "Raising *Happy* Muslim Children" (July/August, 2001) a young face smiles. Although the face is clearly female, its youthfulness creates an ambiguity as to whether the cover depicts a mother or a child. Inside, the lead package decries U.S. societal decline and a lack of role models, calling on parents and teachers to work together to rear good Muslim children. Responsibility falling particularly on those parents whose children attend U.S. public schools, the article alludes to updating traditional Islamic practices with, "Muslim parents need to change some things" (Athar, 2001, p. 36).

The parenting sentiments voiced in this magazine bear an uncanny resemblance to advice written in 19th-century American moral reform publications (see Lueck, 1999). In much the same manner and language that the Protestant women of the moral reform movement counseled parents to counter the ill effects of society, today's Muslim parents are advised to "drop different standards for sons and daughters, allowing sons to get away with many objectionable things and chiding daughters of being lewd for doing the same things" (p. 36). Parents are urged to not tolerate wrong behavior from any child. This article, as many in the magazine commonly do, reaches reach back to the Qur'an in order to interpret Islamic tradition for modern practice.

A question-and-answer sidebar by the ISNA president deals with gender-based treatment of children. Although he opens succinctly with the statement, "Islam does not have double standards for men and women," after some ambiguity he states: "However, it is wise to give more protection to girls, for they are more vulnerable and often become victims of assaults and attacks" (Siddiqi, 2001, p. 43). In a previous answer, as he noted that at the birth of a son a larger animal is usually sacrificed than for a daughter, he stated, "Some scholars say that boys were more vulnerable to death and disease, and so more charity was given for them"; it is not noted when boys outgrow this vulnerability and transfer it to girls. However, on the treatment of girls and boys, he alludes to how American universities warn women to take safety precautions, in order to bring his answer back to traditional gender-based divisions of responsibility: "Muslim men are obligated to protect their wives, mothers, sisters, and daughters" (p. 43). Although the American educational system is often disparaged of, education of girls and boys is stressed throughout the magazine. Another article on raising happy Muslim children, "Who Is Teaching Your Child?" depicts a Muslim woman bending down to instruct a group of mostly male children (p. 40).

In addition to promoting a broad definition of education, Muslims take a holistic approach to healthcare. In keeping with traditional Eastern practices, physical health is linked to mental and spiritual well being. This approach sets it apart from modern Western medicine; although a conservative approach, it further differentiates itself from religious-based health care strategies that have become prominent in the West. For example, one article states, "Islam allows contraception," (Athar, 2002, p. 41), then clearly distinguishes contraception from abortion, which Islam does not condone.

On the cover of the issue "A Muslim Perspective on Healthcare," (January/February, 2002) a male doctor smiles as a woman in the background also looks toward the camera. At first glance, this woman may appear to be a fellow medical professional. Much like the child-mother image of the earlier cover, this smiling image employs an ambiguity as to the role of the woman depicted. This ambiguity suggests the woman may be a colleague, but neither through the photo nor the cover lines is the audience made aware of her identity or status. Upon closer inspection, it can be seen that she wears not a lab coat but a hospital gown and rests against the headboard of a hospital bed, revealing her as a patient. Depicting a stereotypical Western doctor-patient relationship – the confident male doctor in the foreground, in dress shirt and tie and white lab coat, a stethescope draped around his neck, and a smiling female patient sitting on a bed in the background – does not pique Western questioning; such ambiguity instead enables a larger audience appeal.

While depicting a U.S. norm, such a pairing, however would be an unusual juxtaposition in Muslim health care practice. A lead article (Athar, 2002), states, "Same sex healthcare providers are encouraged, but can be overlooked in the case of necessity" (p. 39). It also notes, "All examinations should be done in the presence of a third person of the same sex as the patient, preferably a nurse or relative" (p. 40). With this information, the woman in the background of the cover photo can be seen as a patient, smiling because some emergency procedure is deemed successful. In many ways the privacy this picture speaks to makes it an unusual selection for a cover photo. The appearance of this female face is also unusual in that it does not peer from under a veil, which may further speak to her recovering status.

Another lead article profiles a physician who is the incoming president of a Pakistani physicians association (Umar, 2002); a small non-veiled headshot of this middle-aged doctor accompanies the article. Dr. Raana Akbar's discussion of the association and the physicians' role in America registers surprise when she notes how few female doctors and medical students there are in the United States, stating in contrast the number of women in her graduating class and the fact that her mother was a doctor.

Adhering to contemporary U.S. journalistic conventions against sexism, the author adheres to a professional focus, only describing the doctor's familial roles in the final paragraph.

Women also constitute a presence in *Islamic Horizon* issues in which they do not appear on the cover. Extending the holistic health perspective to the larger social life, women – and men – are encouraged to be involved in their community. The lead photo of an article on an ISNA conference on community development (September/October, 2000) pictures approximately a dozen kerchiefed women listening to an off-camera speaker, with male attendees sitting at tables in the background. The cutline reads, "The conference brought together some 400 Muslim leaders from 35 states and three Canadian provinces, representing some 100 local Islamic centers" (p. 58). A lead collage (November/December, 2000, p. 26) shows women in leadership roles; a photo montage at the conclusion of the article also incorporates women (p. 50), but they are not identified.

The community is linked to its spiritual roots and it is perpetuated by contributions – donated specifically to the Islamic community. The pull quote reads, "Planned giving and endowments allow brothers and sisters in the local community to leave their legacy to Islam" (Craig, 2000, p. 58). As Muslims accrue wealth, giving and investing are encouraged, with articles and advertising alike directing donations toward Islamic charities and investments toward funds that espouse Islamic values.

By sharing wealth exclusively with the Islamic community, a religious activism is urged in order to temper Western capitalist preoccupation with accumulation of material goods as an indicator of success and social value. Other types of religious activism are discussed throughout the magazine, particularly political, with women playing a part of those stories, as well. For example, a Washington-based freelancer (Rana, 2000, p. 14) covers a rally against Israeli actions on Palestinians and includes female sources – a Muslim participant and a member of an organization sponsoring the event.

Women sometimes tell their own stories, such as a woman (Jones, 2002) who writes of the Qur'an she stole from her school library in a small Oregon town. Using it for research, she recalled, "I don't know exactly what I was expecting . . . something in keeping with the evening news; angry rhetoric, crazy musings, anything resembling the vaguely negative image Islam had in my brain." But she found "the tone, the beauty, and, more than anything the familiarity of the words; almost as if I had seen them before" (p. 55). After she left the library with the book, "It took me only about two days of reading to realize that I was a Muslim." The conversion was hard on her family; although they were "never religious, the cultural residue of Christianity clung tightly." Despite her being "shooed out" of a mosque on her first visit because she was a woman, she found validation that day in a Muslim American woman who confirmed that the author was "indeed, a Muslim" (p. 55). In another piece, a mother of two (Hussain, 2001) writes about breastfeeding, which is "a right" of the newborn Muslim child (p. 50). Relying on Islamic tradition, she urges the family to support the mother; she also urges the mother to educate herself as to the benefits of breastfeeding and how to sustain nursing for the first two years. This intimate portrait ran without photos or illustration.

A former "pastor's wife" (Hamblen, 2002) writes that she would not go back to her old life "for anything" (p. 58). While she was searching for answers in Christianity, she met a Muslim and began reading the Qur'an, which she would hide from her husband. He would search the house for the book, saying that "when he found it he would roast it either in the oven or in the fire" because she had "brought Satan into the home" (p. 58). Exasperated, her husband left and she had an epiphany that Islam was her path. Her Muslim acquaintance showed her "the text that women are supposed to cover. So I started wearing the scarf." She countered those who said she had converted to a male-dominated religion with, "[I]f it were geared for men, women would undress instead of cover up." Marked by her beliefs, she was often confronted. "After September 11th, wearing the scarf put me further in the line of fire." This white woman from Indiana found it ironic that she was so often yelled at to "go home" (p. 58).

A 2001 Islam in America section is a one-page profile of a young American Muslim who was a novice from a convent who converted from Catholicism to Islam. Her characteristics emphasized in the deck headline and throughout the article were that she was "petite" and "soft-spoken" in order to contrast her with the behemoth WalMart, in which she carved a space of acceptance, even when she began to wear her face veil (David, 2001, p. 74). In this story, the veil, or hijab, is likened to a piece of female religious garb more familiar to Americans, a Catholic nun's habit. In *Islamic Horizons*, the women of Islam peer from beneath the hijab, but they do show their faces. Women in this magazine are not generally shown with the face veil, or niqab. This piece of garb, however, is mentioned occasionally in text, as in the WalMart article. It is also mentioned significantly in an article on domestic violence, in which a woman donned the niqab in order to hide the scars of her abuse (Nadir, 2001, p. 78).

Although the articles tend to rely primarily on male experts, education is a theme expressed throughout the magazine. Educational context provides non-intimate public settings in which women mix with men. For example, a sidebar on educators

(September/October, 2000) pictures women and men attending a conference. One photo is of seated attendees, a veiled woman holding a microphone standing among them, with the cutline, "An attendee discusses ways to balance Western theoretical and scientific approaches to counseling with Islamic teachings" (p. 60). In the 2001 convention issue (September/October), a woman is shown as a speaker in one of the two opening photos, and girls are depicted in an article on schooling (p. 56). In other conference coverage (July/August 2001) education is also the main topic, with photos showing women interspersed in primarily male gatherings (p. 14). For Westerners, a focus on education that integrates women counters the Taliban's denial of education for women, which typified Islam for the West, particularly for a post-September 11 America. The theme of education continues to the back of the book, where matrimonial classifieds solicit mates. Women seeking spouses are promoted as well educated, with their degrees and special fields listed as some of the first traits to attract a marriage partner.

As a benefit from education, women are shown moving up the ranks. A sidebar (Siddiqi, 2002) addresses the question: "Can women be leaders?" The ISNA president answers that if Islamic principles are followed – "that women should cover themselves properly, men and women should not mix" – then: "A woman can be a leader, just as she can be a professional, scholar . . . or head of a company." However, because they would be a distraction, women should not lead mixed groups in prayer; this tenet is used as a rationale for women not becoming heads of state, since that person also leads prayers. A dual role for women is in evidence, since they "should pay special attention to their homes." Therefore: "Women are restricted to some degree, but are allowed to work outside the home if they know and observe their primary duties" (p. 20). Girls are praised for their involvement in civic matters. For example, a national news short "Muslim in National Spotlight" (September/October, 2002) shows a young woman as a model high school citizen (p. 14). American women in the public eye who model the values of community building are also recognized. For example, at the top of that national news page, Rep. Cynthia McKinney (D-GA) is shown receiving a public service award.

References to U.S. women, however, are not always positive, with their status often used as a point of contrast with Islamic values and a rationale for sex separation. The world news page is typically an amalgam of short articles dealing only obliquely with Islam. Yet those that relate to women often emphasize the status of Islamic women and their advancements in comparison with U.S. counterparts. For example, the three-paragraph "Iran Has Woman Governor" (November/December, 2000) story focuses on the fact that she is the first woman governor since the 1979 revolution. Yet it also notes that the president appointed a woman as one of the vice presidents in 1997; and it takes the opportunity to share the statistic that 58 percent of the first-year students in Iranian universities in 1999 were women (p. 22). A graphic listing Muslim Olympic medallists includes women among them (November/December, 2000, p. 29). Another global short, "Malays To Defeat Sensual Advertising" (May/June, 2001, p. 14), announces a boycott of goods "depicting women in un-Islamic dress" that was called for by a minister who has enforced gender separatism in his state.

Conclusions

In the aftermath of September 11, 2001, as the United States engaged in its war on terrorism, a lack of cultural knowledge of Muslims surfaced. An increase of stories in the popular media reported stereotyping and occasional violence against people of Middle

Eastern descent, while features profiled Muslim-Americans as good neighbors. Yet, Islamic women remained an enigma. Their cloaked difference allowed Western media and political institutions to embellish it with layers of symbolism representing foreignness and female oppression. The women of Islam became a symbol on which an America victimized by terrorism could hang its identification, particularly when it was given articulation by President George W. Bush in his call for the liberation of Afghanistan. Fully draped, these unseen women were ripe for interpretation. They became the victim in need of rescue by U.S. democratic values. To save these women would be to rescue ourselves.

This analysis is mindful of the cautions Mohanty (2000) makes with regard to Western feminist analysis of the veil; therefore the discussion has located a specific image set within a Western context. For this analysis, associated with foreignness, and after the midpoint of this timeframe closely linked with women's oppression, the veil represented a marginalized people. *Islamic Horizons* makes an appeal to the disenfranchised of American society -- those marginalized by their sex, youth, race, or ethnicity -- seeking converts among those disillusioned with secular society or patriarchal religions such as Catholicism. *Islamic Horizons* depicts an alternative in which the marginalized can be involved in their community and their own spiritual growth, and where, within American society, women are shown to be safe and making gains in their own agenda.

Belying modesty, portrayal for an American audience has seductively lifted the veil to sell Islam. Throughout the magazine, the portrayal of Islamic womanhood adheres to accepted U.S. representation of women as ostensible equals while maintaining their subservient status. For example, the male-dominant image of the doctor on the cover is "natural" for an American audience, whereas a cover with two women – one as the patient's doctor – would have been more distraction than widespread appeal; the professional woman would not necessarily have been recognized as such, even among Western women. While conforming to stereotypical portrayal, the magazine also reveals an illusory nature to American equality and proposes an alternative of equal but separate. Although women were shown in mixed public gatherings, separatism was advocated in the writings, in keeping with Islamic teachings. Separatism can be made an appealing option when contrasted with social integration that puts women in danger. The need for separation was often justified by the jeopardy of American integration, such as warnings about campus safety.

The woman-centered aspect is cast as a benefit since it creates opportunities for women. For example, since women are supposed to be treated by female physicians, a need is created for women doctors. When women otherwise marginalized in American society can be shown a path to success, separatism becomes a lure, as many a young Catholic girl can attest, having felt the appeal of the nun's habit when confronted with male society.

By placing women in normalized Western situations, such as a female patient confidently resting behind a male doctor, Western questioning is not activated. By such positioning, *Islamic Horizons* de-problematized culture, race, and even gender. The separatism that the veil signifies works to separate women from men and, in a dual role, separates Muslim women from non-Muslim women. But the open facades of this magazine seemingly revealed Islam to the reader, educating her and drawing her into the sisterhood, forging an identity: "She's just like me, under that veil." Situated in American culture, the diversity of race and ethnicity this magazine showed in the faces under the veil created a mirror image of the "melting pot." The diversity of faces under the veil also worked to Americanize the representation of women as individuals, while presenting Islam as a monolithic, global religion. To post-September 11 Americans, the veil symbolized the fundamentalist Islamic separatism represented through the Taliban's denial of women's rights, particularly the right to a public education. Yet, education was a value characteristically espoused in the magazine. The women of Islam, veiled but diverse, educated but conservative, were portrayed as those who chose to come to Islam.

In modest and seemingly non-exploitive terms, women appear on occasional covers; however, not woman professionals. Women appear on covers of issues that focus on diversity, health care, and children. With the only cover depicting a singular female on the issue devoted to children, Muslim women are portrayed in a comfortable, conservative sphere for a Western audience – with the familiar smile of the cover girl and the focus on children. Inside, women professionals are shown in public settings such as conferences and they are integrated in the news of the day. Yet, when women discuss children, parenting, and other matters of domestic import, they are not shown in domestic situations. Their homes remain private. There were no depictions of intimacy, say between a mother and child in a bedroom. In this magazine, the veil on the private sphere has not been lifted.

With parlance harkening back to the 19th century, advice in *Islamic Horizons* seemed to echo from the first wave of American cultural feminism: to act as a role model in this wayward society and not to accept lewd behavior from either boys or girls. The pedestal of the conservative, morally superior female, reconstructed in terms of 21st century Western women's understanding, offered what could seem like a homecoming to American women who had confronted elusive equality on a daily basis. Reaching back into a time of social transformation, when the women of the moral reform movement attempted to clean up society, the appeal brought forward a seemingly clear-cut role for women and a well defined battle of good and evil on American soil – the battle for the mortal soul. In this iteration, though, the authority is the Qur'an, not the Bible.

Although one might have expected the portrayal of women in *Islamic Horizons* to have shifted markedly after the September 11 attacks, it did not. Representation remained consistent across the timeframe, the difference lying not in the magazine's portrayal of womanhood but in the larger context of Western viewing. The subtext, which often surfaced, that Muslims in the United States must counter negative media images, was already well embedded in the magazine. Prior to September 11, however, the construction of Islamic womanhood operated in a relative void; despite *Islamic Horizons* claims of eight million Muslims living in North America (Time, 2000), they were being symbolically annihilated in mainstream media. After September 11, in the negative space of the women's draped bodies was written recent and painful U.S. knowing of victimization. Vivian (1999) argued that the 1994 French attempt to unveil the Algerian women was an imperial strategy to assimilate a former colony (p. 10). In the case of the United States, the tables were seemingly turned, with the United States relying on a historical recognition of itself as a set of former colonies. Because of this historical identification, empathy is possible with the colonized, and after September 11, identification with the victimized. Yet, in this representation resides a signal of the shift from colony to colonizer. American culture already having achieved global imperialism through its media, through its war on terrorism it was on the verge of physically stepping into the role of colonizer with its action in Afghanistan, and later Iraq.

The *Islamic Horizons* reports of a rise in Muslim-American acceptance following September 11 were substantiated in other sources. An editorial in *Religion in the News* noted the "huge collective effort" of politics, media, and religion to "make it clear that our Muslim neighbors are valued threads in the ever more variegated tapestry of American society" (Silk, 2002, p. 1). This editorial, however, noted that that effort was short-lived, with politicians curtailing their outreach and mainstream media soon reverting to more traditional reporting. Although expressing concern that "Muslim Americans are feeling increasingly beleaguered and isolated from the rest of American society," it nonetheless cited Knight Ridder and *Los Angeles Times* polls indicating that public opinion continued to carry favorable impressions of Muslim-Americans into September 2002 (p. 22), the timeframe that brackets this analysis.

Showing many faces of Islam under the veil, *Islamic Horizons* attempted to mirror America's diversity as well as its individualism. The appeal to sisterhood and separatism masked the disempowering contradiction that the unification it offered would lock women together into endless transition. The ostensibly seamless appeal held promise for women marginalized by inequality and beset by a lack of security on the homefront. Against the foibles of American society, the cloak of a global Islam was spread and women were invited to come home.

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SHE MAY BE FIT, BUT SHE MUST BE FASHIONABLE:
WOMEN'S SPORTS AND FITNESS MARKETING
THROUGH THE LENS OF FRENCH FEMINIST THEORY

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Abstract

She May Be Fit, But She Must Be Fashionable:

Women's Sports and Fitness Marketing through the Lens of French Feminist Theory

Using theories associated with French feminism, this essay seeks to add a different theoretically-informed perspective for analyzing how female specificity is configured in U.S. sports and fitness marketing to women. In examining whether the visual and rhetorical strategies used by Nike and Reebok can disrupt, or circumvent, patriarchal gender logic, I pay particular attention to Irigaray's theories of subjectivity.

Keywords: female athletes, gender representation, media coverage, sports marketing, Nike, women's sports, advertising

> Goods can only enter into relations under the surveillance of their "guardians." It would be out of the question for them to go to the "market" alone, to profit from their own value, to talk to each other, to desire each other, without the control of the selling-buying-consuming subjects. And their relations must be relations of rivalry in the interest of tradesmen. (Irigaray, 1985b, p. 110)

In the 2000 Paramount motion picture, ***What Women Want***, Mel Gibson plays an arrogant and chauvinistic advertising executive named Nick Marshall who, by a fluke accident, is given the ability to gauge women's innermost thoughts and insecurities. Now, with a woman's sensibility, Marshall sees the world differently, and his newfound empathy, the audience is led to believe, saves not only his career—he has just been passed up for a promotion to a "ball-buster" named Darcy McGuire, played by Helen Hunt—but also his soul. The recuperation of the latter is momentarily halted, though, when Marshall ultimately succumbs to his former ways and steals McGuire's marketing ideas for the Nike women's shoe campaign that they are both working on. Later, when he presents the resulting full-length TV commercial to his agency and to Nike executives, Marshall vividly narrates the ad, from beginning shots of a solitary woman running (and pondering the meaning of the road and of life, he tells us) to the closing tagline, "No Games. Just Sports."

According to Hélène Cixous (1981), the titular question posed by this film ("What do women want?") is the most profound unanswered question in philosophy and psychoanalysis. The woman question also appears to be infinitely perplexing to consumer marketers; see Miller (1992) for an example of one of the (numerous) trade articles on how to market successfully to the women's segment. In consumer marketing, women still represent a "dark continent": They

are considered unknowable, a special case, the Other, who pose a unique and difficult challenge for those trying to reach and persuade them. The question driving marketers (How do we tap into this elusive market?) underscores the question (How do we meet the *special* needs of women, who, as we know, are emotional and otherwise different from men?).

In the case of sports and fitness marketing, one of the most pervasive and significant forms of contemporary discourse (see Goldman & Papson, 1998), the question is, as illustrated by the above example, of central importance. Amid a maturing industry, with stagnant growth among male consumers, sports and fitness companies are increasingly focusing their attention on women.[1] In the first of these "women's initiatives" in the early 1990s, industry leaders Nike and Reebok crafted dueling campaigns that urged women to empower themselves through sport; the messages were gentle, inspirational, and designed to speak in a woman's voice (Cole & Hribar, 1995). (Nike's 1991 print campaign was aptly titled, "Empathy.") Although the approaches were reformulated later in the decade, as women's sports seemingly exploded, to become more serious, competitive, and aggressive (i.e., like men's sports and fitness marketing), the effort to "speak to women as women" remained the same.

By many indicators, sports and fitness marketers appear to have struck a winning formula. In the 'postfeminist imaginary' constructed by the popular press (Faludi, 1991), and, I add, by marketers, the version of feminism articulated in sports and fitness marketing discourse has gained the sympathies of many young women who are hesitant, in general, to take on the feminist label (see Cole & Hribar, 1995; Wolf, 1993).[2] Even with a proliferation of mediated representations of female power infiltrating the popular consciousness (e.g., Buffy, Xena, Witchblade, Lara Croft), images of hard, sweaty female physicality are still rare in the commercial media system, giving the pervasive marketing efforts of both Nike and Reebok,

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which both recently launched new, multimillion dollar women's campaigns in the U.S., even more resonance. As Goldman and Papson (1998) observe, sports and fitness companies, Nike, in particular, are among the world's largest advertisers, and the symbolic imagery and signifying iconography associated with these companies are among the world's most recognized.

Although the 'new' archetype of female power contained in the figure of the female athlete is potentially empowering, it is also contradictory in that the very term, *female athlete*, is still constructed as oppositional. As Creedon (1994b) and Willis (1982) observe, historically, patriarchal sports ideology has worked to suppress women's sports participation, either by coercion or through the use of negative tropes (e.g., female athletes are inferior and/or 'unnatural'). For many scholars (e.g., Cole & Hribar, 1995; Dworkin & Messner, 1999), the new and "positive" women's strategies used by sports and fitness marketers, as well as by other cross-sector marketers, are problematic in that they still cling to sexist advertising codes for representing female gender. They ultimately contain female power by reducing women, as they are so many other times in media, to sexual objects. Furthermore, how can we believe that Nike is a champion of women's empowerment through sport, as it boasts on its corporate timeline ("Marketing innovation," n.d.), when it shunned women's marketing for many years out of fear that doing so might tarnish its "authentic and serious" image with men (Cole & Hribar, 1995, p. 359)?

In this paper, I explore issues of sexual difference in contemporary women's advertising, using recent efforts by sports and fitness marketers Nike and Reebok as my object of analysis. My goal is to contribute to the ongoing investigation and critique of these texts by mass communication and sports sociology researchers through the application of a new perspective, that filtered from the lens of French feminist theory, in particular, the materialist and

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psychoanalytical theories of Luce Irigaray, Monique Wittig, and Hélène Cixous. Using Irigaray's theory of the subject and her thinking on woman's commodification in the social and symbolic orders, Wittig's work on women's representation and social construction, Cixous's dissection of woman's metaphoric decapitation, in addition to work by feminist psychoanalytic film theorists, I examine how femininity is specified in commercial advertising and consider whether the constitution of a female subject position (a female gaze) is tenable within this pervasive manifestation of the dominant, and phallocentric, scopic economy.

Irigaray's Theory of the Subject

In her seminal work, *Speculum (of the Other Woman)*,[3] Luce Irigaray (1985a) passionately critiques the Western philosophical system and its specular logic of the same, which, she argues, is entirely founded on woman's subordination (through representation, use, and exchange) and which fixes woman--always and unchangingly--as the Other (to the male universal). In advancing the key concept of *specul(ariz)ation*, Irigaray argues that Western philosophical discourse is incapable of representing femininity in ways other than as the negative of its *own* reflection, and, as such, is fundamentally narcissistic. Woman's sole purpose, Irigaray (1985a) contends, is to reflect, or project, man's achievements, ego, etc. (and reproduce him sexually and psychically): "Woman constitutes the silent ground on which the patriarchal thinker erects his discursive constructs." As the Other, her identity has been completely erased, ensuring that man's sense of power, mastery, and control, as well as his fears and insecurities, will absorb him *and* her. Irigaray states, "In the subject's sight everything *outside* remains forever a condition making possible the image and the reproduction of the self. A faithful, polished mirror, empty of altering reflections. Immaculate of all auto-copies" (p. 136).

Perhaps, not surprisingly, she views specularism (the dominance of the visual sense) as being fundamentally phallic in that this sight-privileged system is the key mechanism by which women are denied subjectivity and representation. As Irigaray (1985a) argues in *Speculum*, female sexuality is defined in terms of visibility, and it is in the gaze--which is unequivocably male--that sexual difference is founded, discovered, realized, and confirmed, and female sexuality and subjectivity are negated. Phallocentrism privileges sight over all of the other senses, and, reflecting its phallomorphism, it privileges the penis, which is visible within its given parameters, over woman's 'hidden' sexual organs. In the Freudian framework, the invisibility of women's sex organs, their *nothing-to-be-looked at-ness*, renders them absent and symbolically castrated (as Irigaray, 1985b, p. 47, mimics the master, "Woman's castration is defined as her having nothing you can see." Sublimated, according to Freud, woman exists only for man's sexual pleasure: Her orgasms are merely vicarious. The threat of castration mutes female desire for the sole purpose of securing man's fantasy life.

Freud's ocular conception of sexuality, Irigaray reasons, leads to femininity being constructed as passive, with woman rendered merely a receptacle, *an object*--a point which Irigaray (1985b) illustrates by conjuring the imagery of Greek statuary: Frozen and immobilized, woman has never been more graceful, lovely, and womanly! This view also provides the basis for female sexuality and desire being unknowable and unrepresentable in phallologocentric discourse, for woman being denied entry into language and social life (i.e., into Lacan's Symbolic Order): Woman is "off-stage, off-side, beyond representation, beyond selfhood" (Irigaray, 1985a, p. 22). (As Margaret Whitford, 1991, explains, Irigaray's critique of Lacanian psychoanalysis and its construction of woman as lacking centers on how his theoretical and

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discursive mirror is positioned: It *cannot look inside*, thus, negating any chance that woman's sexuality or subjectivity might ever be constituted.) As Irigaray (1985a, p. 21) succinctly states,

> One can only agree in passing that it is impossible exhaustively to represent what woman might be, given that a certain economy of representation--inadequately perceived by psychoanalysis, at least in the 'scientific discourse' that it speaks--functions through a tribute to woman that is never paid or even assessed. The whole problematic of Being has been elaborated thanks to that loan. It is, thus, in all exactitude, unrealizable to *describe the being* of woman."

Irigaray on Women as Commodities:

Women's Bodies as an Object of Exchange under the Patriarchal Social Order

In "This Sex Which Is Not One," Irigaray (1985b) shifts her focus from a critique of woman's representation within phallocentrism to the related discussion of her commodification, drawing out new linkages between the repression of female sexuality and woman's objectification in both the symbolic and capitalist social orders. In her essay, "When the Goods Get Together," Irigaray (1985b) argues that the sociocultural order is structured around the law of hommosexuality, an ideological framework which sanctions all-male relationships predicated on the economic and sexual exchange and transaction of women between men (and that protects the fissures that might result from the *practice* of homosexuality). With the logic of the same governing hommosexuality, heterosexuality exists, yes, but it serves only to delegate social positions between the sexes, wherein "Woman exists only as the possibility of mediation, transaction, transference—between man and his fellow-creatures, indeed between man and himself."[4]

Extrapolating Marx's notion of the commodity fetish to the case of woman's function in contemporary capitalist societies, Irigaray contends that woman *is* a "commodity, a use-value for men" (1985b, p. 31). While absolutely essential to capitalism's functioning, she finds only alienation and homogenization: Her individuality has completely been abstracted, and she gains value only in relation to other commodities and only from being judged by men. She has discursively (and materially) been constituted as a mere object. As Irigaray notes, "Men make commerce *of* them [women], but they do not enter into any exchanges *with* them" (p. 172). Thus, the law "requires that women lend themselves to alienation in consumption, and to exchanges in which they do not participate" (p. 172). There is exploitation but no remuneration (because that would be a double system of exchange). Irigaray's cogent analysis clearly exposes the underlying enigma between capitalism and the phallus.

Linking this argument to her thinking on representation (i.e., that woman is given a negative, absent, and reflective role in discourse) and, specifically, to her concept of specul(ariz)ation, Irigaray (1985, p. 190) asserts that "women/commodities" are denied subject status because they cannot reflect themselves (i.e., they can only take on the form that men want for them). She notes, "*Commodities, women, are a mirror of value of and for men*" (p. 176), an observation that echoes Wittig's: "Wherever they are, whatever they do....they are seen (and made) sexually available to men, and they, breasts, buttocks, costume, must be visible. They must wear their yellow star, their constant smile, day and night" (Wittig, The Category, p. 7). As Moi (1985) surmises, hommosexuality is structured so as to deny woman subjectivity (the pleasure of self-representation) in order to ensure objects for man's specularizing subject. As she is elsewhere, woman is currency in this specular economy.

Her body is absolutely essential in the visual economy of advertising, the predominant sign system of contemporary life. In his expanded theorization of commodity fetishism, Sut Jhally (1987) argues that, in contemporary capitalist formations, it is commercial advertising which infuses illusory symbolic values onto objects (which have been stripped of their originary meanings during the processes of production) and which transforms goods into the commodity-form. Through advertising, the commodity is mystified (i.e., appearance becomes more important than essence, and exchange-value more significant than use-value). Often, appearance is incongruent with essence, with the meanings produced by advertising having no relation to a commodity's *actual* use-value (e.g., values such as sex, humor, and fear are attached to products in ways that only make sense within the semiotic codes of advertising). As an unremarkable example, consider the common use of female models (often in various stages of undress) in print ads for autos to signify to the (male) reader that the car will give him sex. Although the correspondence between the auto and the female model is not seemingly direct, in Marxian terms, the reality that is constituted is as valid and significant as any other: Appearance counts.

The above illustration provides a very succinct and typical example of how women's bodies are often used and objectified in advertising messages to sell products. But, advertising, like any cultural form, is dynamic and often contradictory. As many scholars have noted, advertisers responded to second-wave feminism often by co-opting the rhetoric of liberal feminism to give their products and identities the look and feel of cultural change, of being 'with the times.'[5] Drawing a pun on the commodity fetish, Goldman, Heath, and Smith (1991) conceptualize these tactics as *commodity feminism*, wherein themes associated with liberal feminism (e.g., emancipation, willpower, sexual freedom, workforce participation, independence, assertiveness, and control) are strategically attached to consumer goods and

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objects. Signs that connote feminism are associated with those that cue traditional femininity (see Goffman, 1979[6]).

This conceptualization, I argue, provides a more sophisticated and critical framework with which to examine 'images of women' in commercial mass media.[7] In commodity feminist discourses, female consumers are encouraged to use consumer goods to reflect their individuality and autonomy, as well as their dismissal of traditional gender roles. As Goldman, Heath, and Smith (1991) note, the primary illusion that is cultivated is that of "possessive individualism" (p. 349). Similar to the preceding example, commodity feminism is deployed by semiotic association, but the formula is inverted, as in a Donna Karan campaign from the early 1990s, entitled, "In Women We Trust." One TV spot shows a gorgeous female model campaigning for President and then winning. As she is being sworn into office, the new chief executive, outfitted in a tailored business suit with a revealingly low-cut blouse, is surrounded by admiring men (Miller, 1992). Here, the apparel maker's suits are simultaneously associated with power and with sex to illustrate the compatibility of a woman being both strong *and* sexy—*the* definition, according to most contemporary women's marketers, of liberal feminist happiness, success, and empowerment. Onto the hollow "women/commodities" described by Irigaray, the symbolic meanings accorded by advertising, then, provide the sheen of control, mastery, power, liberation, etc., that are constitutive of commodity feminism.

In their critique, Goldman, Heath, and Smith (1991) observe the many ironies and problems with commercial advertising's appropriation of popular feminist rhetoric/sentiment to give women what they are perceived to want, namely, that it makes feminism into a style defined by consumption, which is ultimately alienating and perplexing because it tells women that they *should* be happy now (it's definitely rooted in the 'postfeminist imaginary'). In preaching

individual power (telling women that they can be all they can be), commodity feminism also locates the problem squarely within the individual, at the same time that it locates power outside of her (i.e., in the purchase and use of commodities): She has everything within her reach, all the joys afforded by consumption, so, if she is unhappy, that is a personal problem, a failure on her part. This echoes Irigaray's (1985b) contention in "Cosi Fan Tutti" that woman is given no grounds on which to complain about her situation in patriarchy because the problem is rooted solely in herself, she is 'not-all.' Furthermore, while commodity feminist discourses may infuse some popular feminist rhetoric, may contain some odes to the 'New Woman,' they ultimately preserve traditional, patriarchal femininity by presenting images that are coded as heterosexual, conventionally attractive, of proper weight, smiling, White, etc. Like all commercial advertising, these discourses ultimately work to reproduce dominant power relations (Williamson, 1978).

As Cole and Hribar (1995) note, in their critique of Nike's women's advertising from the early 1990s, both Nike's empathy and its prescription (i.e., exercise/buy Nike products) locate the problem at the personal level; solidarity and political action are never endorsed. Granted, Nike's status as a multinational corporation does not make this surprising: Why would the company want its 'Western' female consumers to become politically engaged? --especially when these discourses work so well at obscuring Nike's much publicized abuses of "Eastern" women in its Southeast Asian factories (see Enloe, 1995). Applying the concept of the commodity fetish, Nike's women's advertising mystifies the actual and material production processes that lead to many women's misery for a select few women's 'empowerment.' Furthermore, its women's advertising, as Avenoso (1992) and Cole and Hribar (1995) have noted, still interpellates a preferred subject who is White, middle-class, conventionally attractive, and heterosexual; for example, in its numerous running ads, Nike almost always features a solitary White woman

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(Goldman & Papson, 1998). When women of color are featured, as in basketball ads, they are often constructed as either helpless or exceptional, as Lafrance (1998) noted in her critique of Nike's 1995 "If You Let Me Play" campaign. Thus, in delivering a supposed message of universal, *women's* empowerment through sport, Nike constructs a hierarchical binary wherein racial, sexuality, age, and other differences are erased.

Irigaray on the Possibility of a Female Gaze

For Irigaray, woman is unlikely to rupture the entrenched visual logic that predominates in phallocentrism. For her, looking is a masculine pleasure, and touch, a female one. Given that the "process of looking always requires a split between subject and object" (Irigaray, 1985b), woman--who is not allowed a subject position--would not be afforded this pleasure. She, thus, wants to recuperate the marginalized sense of touch, and she proffers autoeroticism as the only way of conceptualizing women's pleasure and disrupting patriarchal notions of subjectivity and sexuality which confine woman to passivity. Guided by a "vulvomorphic logic" (Gallop, 1988, p. 94), Irigaray offers the *two lips* metaphor, wherein woman, unlike man, is positioned as having *multiple* erogenous zones and the ability to achieve pleasure all of the time -- and without effort. As she explains, "The value granted to the only definable form excludes the one that is in play in female autoeroticism. The *one* of form, the individual sex, proper name, literal meaning—supercedes, by spreading apart and dividing, this touching of *at least two* (lips) which keeps woman in contact with herself, although it would be impossible to distinguish exactly what 'parts' are touching each other." (p. 101). Just as the two lips metaphor reconceptualizes the potential for female sexual pleasure, it also offers a way to reimagine her engagement in language: Just as woman touches herself all the time sexually, she does the same when she speaks. As Irigaray notes, "For when 'she' says something, it is already no longer identical to

what she means. Moreover, her statements are never identical to anything. Their distinguishing feature is one of contiguity. They touch (*upon*). And when they wander too far from this meaning, she stops and begins again from 'zero': her body-sex organ."

Indeed, there is a great deal of evidence in support of Irigaray's dismissal of the possibility of a female gaze in mediated representations. In his famous study, *Ways of Seeing* (1972), British art historian John Berger offers the following summary of gender representation in classical Western art: "…*men act* and *women appear*. Men look at women. Women watch themselves being looked at. This determines not only most relations between men and women but also the relation of women to themselves. The surveyor of woman in herself is male: the surveyed female. Thus she turns herself into an object—and most particularly an object of vision: a sight" (p. 47). Consumed by how she looks, Berger asserts that woman in painting exists solely to serve the needs of the (male) "spectator-owner" (p. 56), giving credence to Irigaray's (1985a) contention in *Speculum* that woman is rendered absent and negative in discourse.

In her seminal article, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema"--widely considered to be the founding text of feminist psychoanalytic film criticism--British film theorist and filmmaker Laura Mulvey (1975) offers a similar reading of how classical Hollywood cinema constructs sexual difference. In Mulvey's framework, which derives from Freud's theory of femininity, spectatorial identification is constructed in terms of a gendered binary relationship wherein the subject (spectator/protagonist) is coded as male and as active and the object (image) is coded as female and passive. Furthermore, this object signifies the threat of castration to the unilateral male spectator, who is positioned as repressing his exhibitionism and projecting this repressed desire onto the woman on screen. Mulvey asserts that the psychoanalytic mechanisms of

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voyeurism (in Freudian terms, "scopophilia") and fetishism work to contain this threat. Voyeurism derives from the male subject/spectator's pleasure in looking at the female on film as an object. Mulvey contrasts the pleasures emerging from voyeurism with those of narcissism in that she views voyeurism as active (inscribed as masculine) and desiring of the female object and narcissism as passive (inscribed as feminine) and identifying with the male protagonist. Woman's function in traditional film, for Mulvey, is that of image and bearer of the look.

Following from Mulvey (1975), Mary Ann Doane (1982) considers the viability of a female gaze in both still photography and classical cinema. In her examination of the Doisneau photograph, *Un Regard Oblique*, Doane contends that women who appropriate the gaze, or look actively (e.g., stare, wear glasses, or figure prominently and actively as protagonists, as in horror films), exist only as part of a "dirty joke" (p. 85), which is meant to ensure the male spectator position/visual pleasure. Drawing a parallel with psychoanalytic and philosophical discourses which marginalize woman, even as they obsess over her, the structure of looking in the visual economy may feature woman front and center, but it is only a punitive gesture leading to her ultimate objectification and erasure (e.g., her gaze is averted, her body exposed for the male spectator/subject's pleasure).

We might surmise, then, that the threat of decapitation consumes the female spectator, as castration does for her male counterpart. Cixous (1981) offers, "It's a question of submitting feminine disorder, its laughter, its inability to take the drumbeats seriously, to the threat of decapitation. If man operates under the threat of castration, if masculinity is culturally ordered by the castration complex, it might be said that the backlash, the return, on women of this castration anxiety is the displacement as decapitation, execution, of woman, as loss of her head" (p. 43). This metaphoric decapitation has been figuratively enacted in fairy tales, Cixous tells us, in two

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common scenarios: first, the repeated consignment of compliant female characters to their beds, in the perpetual lull of the dream, as they await their knight in shining armor (literally in *Sleeping Beauty*); and, second, for female characters who transgress their allotted position (e.g., who speak or who venture into the world to assuage their curiosity), brutal punishment, such as being ravaged by the big, bad wolf (in *Little Red Riding Hood*). As Cixous surmises, "Women have no choice other than to be decapitated…If they don't actually lose their heads by the sword, *they only keep them on condition that they lose them* – lose them, that is, to complete silence, turned into automatons" (pp. 42-43). Like her counterpart in fairy tales, the transgressive woman appears to have no place within classical film code.

To explain why filmic women are challenged in appropriating the gaze, Doane (1982) contends that woman "is constructed differently in relation to processes of looking" (p. 80) because of her bodily relationship. Similar in some ways to Chodorow's materialist object-relations theory, Doane's psychoanalytic framework posits that woman, having never separated from her mother, is intimately connected with her body and constantly reminded of her castration. This corporeality makes it impossible for her to assume the role of voyeur or fetishist. Conceptualizing female specificity in terms of the binary relationship of spatial proximity and distance, Doane argues, much like Irigaray (1985b), that women cannot undergo the splitting into subject and object required for looking. Because they cannot distance themselves from images, they over-identify with them. As she states, "[F]or the female spectator there is a certain over-presence of the image—she *is* the image." (p. 78).

Unlike Mulvey's earlier work (1975), Doane conceptualizes the possibility of a female spectator position within three parameters: (1) identifying with, or adopting, the masculine position, which would amount to transvestitism; (2) over-identifying with her own image, which would amount to masochism; or (3) "becoming one's own object of desire, in assuming the image in the most radical way," which would amount to narcissism (p. 82). Although Mulvey (1989) would later revisit her notion of the fixed male gaze and address some of its criticisms, she still denied the possibility of a female gaze within conventional cinema, contending that the female protagonist's sexual identity is always destabilized by the men around her. She, much like the female spectator, forever oscillates between the pseudo-empowerment of transvestitism/masculine identification and the passivity of masochism/female identification. Doane, on the other hand, sees in masquerade a potentially viable strategy for constituting a female subject:

> The masquerade, in flaunting femininity, holds it at a distance. Womanliness is a mask which can be worn or removed. The masquerade's resistance to patriarchal positioning would therefore lie in its denial of the production of femininity as closeness, as presence to itself, as, precisely, imagistic. The transvestite adopts the sexuality of the other—the woman becomes a man in order to attain the necessary distance from the image. Masquerade, on the other hand, involves a realignment of femininity, the recovery, or more accurately, simulation, of the missing gap or distance. To masquerade is to manufacture a lack in the form of a certain distance between oneself and one's image. (Doane, 1982, p. 81)

The excess of femininity, for example, as in the femme fatale, directly challenges the female image: It disrupts male structures of looking at women and opens a space of negotiation, a distance from the image wherein woman might reappropriate it. In doing so, the masquerade, a strategy also endorsed by Irigaray (1985b), is threatening to the male spectator/subject: "By destabilising the image, the masquerade confounds this masculine structure of the look. It effects

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a defamiliarisation of female iconography..." Yet, Doane (1982) ultimately dismisses the masquerade as a viable strategy, asserting that the appearance of female spectator position is, in essence, masochism -- a point on which Stacey (1985), who critiques the masquerade position for always constituting the woman as Other, seems to agree.

Important as Mulvey's and Doane's work have been, they also been critiqued for almost entirely negating the potential for female agency, subjectivity, and pleasure within dominant modes of filmic representation (Stacey, 1988; van Zoonen, 1994). Through a 'materialist use of psychoanalysis' (i.e., informed by Chodorow's and Gilligan's object-relations theory), Byars (1988), unlike Doane, finds a way to account for female pleasure in narrative cinema by arguing that women's attachment to their mothers produces a desire to see women on screen, hence, women's attraction to melodrama, to the classical "women's film." (Also, for the lesbian spectator, there is also an erotic attraction in seeing women on screen.) Similarly Arbuthnot and Seneca (1990) argue that *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes*, while unabashedly a 'Hollywood' film, in many ways inverts the hommosocial framework described by Irigaray in having its female characters pursue men and marriage, but reserve their deep, abiding (platonic) love for each other. For the female spectator, then, this presents the opportunity of identification and pleasure in women's relationships. Cowie (1997) contends that Mulvey's (1988) blind spot continues to be the rigid construction of binary dualisms (i.e., male = active and female = passive) that negates a female spectator position by giving her only two options: identify with the male as subject or with the female as object. For Cowie, spectatorial processes are complicated and contingent-- they are not seamless -- and the notion of a unilateral male gaze is too simplistic. She notes, "There is...no single or dominant look in cinema with which we identify--neither the male look nor the identification with the camera. Rather, there is a continual construction of looks, and hence a shifting production of spectator position, so that it is the structure of the looks in a film which *is* determining of the spectator's place..." (p. 71). For her, there are *many* looks arranged in a particular structure, which position spectator-text relations.

Other researchers have found rich female spectatorial possibilities in television programming.[8] In her examination of the TV program *Cagney and Lacey*, Gamman (1988) argues that a subversive female gaze is possible, and, calling on Kristeva in *About Chinese Women*, it can be produced through *mockery*. In *Cagney and Lacey*, for example, the strategy is deployed by having the female detectives challenge the fixity of gender roles (e.g., laughing at machismo, looking back [i.e., not averting their gaze], questioning sexism, etc.). Although the female gaze would never assume a dominant position in mainstream entertainment media, mockery works to destabilize masculine power and create a feminist subtext, one which would afford female identification and pleasure. (For Arbuthnot and Seneca, 1990, the pleasures found in *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* -- resistance to male objectification and connectedness between women -- are similarly afforded by the gaze [or looking back], stance, use of space, activity, costume, and camera and lighting.) Modleski (1982) also contends that a female spectator position can be constituted in television (and other "low-brow") offerings. In soap opera, Modleski argues, women find a sense of connectedness in having many characters with which to identify and even forge vicarious power and a rhythm (i.e., constantly interruptive) that is similar to the experience of many women, especially those who work inside the house during the day. So, even while it ultimately upholds patriarchal ideology, soap opera can serve as a vehicle for women's pleasure.

Unlike Cowie, who uses Lacan to retheorize female spectatorship, de Lauretis (1984) argues that most psychoanalytic approaches to film, such as those offered by Christian Metz (*The*

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Imaginary Signifier), deny a female subject position because of their structuralist imprint. Referring to her key metaphor, she offers that psychoanalytic film theory "still poses woman as telos and origin of a phallic desire, as dream woman forever pursued and forever held at a distance, seen and invisible on another scene" (p. 25). She is the object and field on which men's representation is procured, similar to Irigaray's (1985a) argument, but she remains incoherent (which adheres to Kristeva's ideas about the chora). So, psychoanalytic film criticism, she argues, negates the possibility for female spectatorship because it gives primacy to the phallic signifier and it starts with a given notion of the subject -- a point echoed by Arbuthnot and Seneca (1990), who challenge the persistence focus on the male voyeur and his pleasures, etc., within feminist film criticism. Like the dream woman that has been mentioned, the female spectator is caught "between the look of the camera (the masculine representation) and the image on the screen (the specular fixity of the feminine representation), not one or the other but neither" (de Lauretis, 1984, p. 35).

Discussion and Conclusion

As Willis (1982) notes, sports and fitness render patriarchal ideology very visible, manufacturing and continually reinscribing sexual difference in terms that are clear and 'common-sensical' to every observer. Of course, women are secondary to men in terms of speed, endurance, and strength: They are the weaker sex. And, although they may work hard and be 'good girls'/good *female* athletes, they will never surpass men, never catch up -- because of the burden imposed upon them by their (inferior but special) bodies. (Underlying these constructions, of course, is the implicit acknowledgement that women are secondary to men in terms of strength of character, willpower, emotional strength and conviction, intelligence, and so on.)

In their respective works, *Volatile Bodies* and *Unbearable Weight*, Elizabeth Grosz and Susan Bordo each advance a claim that is strikingly similar: that the body is discursively constructed and historically contingent and that a key effect of the nature/cultural dualism is to relegate women's bodies (and, subsequently, their minds) to second-class status. Grosz contends that philosophical discourse has constructed women as more connected with their bodies, and, thus, women are more identified with their bodies (hence, reproduction and sexuality are made central to women's experience; and, following this association, women's bodies are constructed as weaker). As she notes, "…women are somehow *more* biological, *more* corporeal, and *more* natural than men" (p. 14).) For Bordo (1993), the (female) body is a site of struggle, and its construction as passive is an effect of gendering. Both are arguing that femininity and corporeality are tools of oppression. .

In the case of female athletes, one longstanding claim—that athleticism diminishes femininity (i.e., makes them more like men)--has been used over and over to contain women's sports and fitness participation and, thus, the potential power and pleasure(s)—sexual and other—derived from active, instrumental use of their bodies and, often, being with other women (as in team sports). "To succeed as an athlete can be to fail as a woman," Willis (1982, p. 36) observes. Thus, the gender logic underlying the patriarchal ideology of corporeality and athleticism work to contain female power, agency, identity, and sexuality.

In tracing the development of female athlete stereotypes from Greek mythological ideals, media scholar Pam Creedon (1994a) juxtaposes the differing construction of two goddesses, Athena and Artemis, and how these mythological tropes are manifested in contemporary media coverage of female athletes (today's most visible manifestations, I argue, of the goddess). As she observes, the construction of the Artemis myth (i.e., of a virulent female warrior) threatens

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hegemonic masculinity and has been used to contain women's (em)powerment through sport. The construction of Athena, on the other hand, as having a more traditionally feminine physicality appeases patriarchal sports ideology by providing a limited, restrictive range wherein female sports and fitness participation can be accommodated. And, as Creedon offers here and elsewhere (1998), the Artemis trope still lingers in media and marketing treatment of the female athlete (for example, in the "female apologetic" strategy described by Kane (1996), which enables girls and women to participate in sports only as long as they adhere to the beauty prescriptions offered by dominant culture [buy in to the "beauty myth," as described by Wolf, 1991], still assert their heterosexuality, etc.)

In its crystallization of gender display codes and representational strategies, advertising has, perhaps, not surprisingly, been the object of analysis for most of the gender research done in mass communication (though, the disciplinary foundation has prevented much investigation into it as a potential site of power and pleasure, as would be provided by critical and cultural studies). Although recent sports and fitness advertising seems to pose a challenge to many traditional codes for representing femininity, Cole and Hribar (1995) and Dworkin and Messner (1999) question both the sincerity and effectiveness of these newly-found odes to liberal feminism. Coinciding, and, perhaps, cultivating the neoliberal phenomenon that is *fitness chic* (Whannel, 1982), these new strategies seem to embody what many see as change, as progress: the realization, granted, to a limited degree, of what feminist researchers and practitioners in mass communication have wanted for over two decades—more gender equity in mass media, more images of female power with which to identify. But, the representations offered are still paradoxical and uneven in that the active woman is now only newly-muscled: She still clings, without hesitation, to dominant beauty ideals. She may be fit, but she must be fashionable.[9] The female athlete (and, for that matter, the action hero) is still defined as a woman; gender is still her primary issue. Following from Bordo (1993), these new discourses fail to critique the very conception of a feminine ideal, which now has moved to even more unobtainable ideals (with the similar devastating effects on girls' and women's physical health and self-esteem—as amply documented by media effects, psychological, and health research). Ever changing, the ideal now demands that a woman not only be thin but also muscled.[10]

So, while having female models face the camera and make bold declarations, or statements, in the first person -- Nike has used this strategy, for example, in its 1991 "Empathy" print ads and in its 1995 print/TV executions for the "If You Let Me Play" campaign; Reebok, in its 1992 "I Believe" TV spots[11] -- may seem 'radical', this is merely 'lip service,' within Irigaray's theoretical paradigm. As Whitford (1991) notes, in Irigaray's view, just because a woman speaks or uses the first person does not mean she is putting forth her subjectivity in that a larger structural change is needed in order for women to really speak as women (*parler femme*).[12] Additionally, we need to critique similar strategies wherein woman is praised (e.g., both Nike's, as well as Reebok's, current "goddess worship" campaigns). As Irigaray (1985b) notes, when she dissects the treatment of lovely Roman statues: "Stifled beneath all those eulogistic or denigratory metaphors, she is unable to unpick the seams of her disguise and indeed takes a certain pleasure in them…how could she articulate any sound from beneath this cheap chivalric finery? How find a voice, make a choice strong enough, subtle enough to cut through those layers of ornamental style, that decorative sepulcher, where even her breath is lost" (pp. 142-43). Symbolically and otherwise, when woman is thus put on a pedestal like this, she is (often? always?) silenced, frozen… As Irigaray (1985b) notes in "Any Theory of the Subject," both

when woman submits to objectification and when she tries to take up the male subject position, she is appropriated by the masculine.

In both "Equal or Different" and "Sexual Difference," Irigaray (1985b) asserts that egalitarian feminism is ultimately a naïve political project, which will not produce sexual difference because it clings to a male model, and which confines women's liberation to having only a "fleeting inscription in History" (p. 32). It only provides "local concessions" ("Sexual Difference"). More to the point, egalitarian/liberal feminism, and the recent infiltration into commercial media messages that I have described here, *misses* the point. It does not challenge the rigid codes of phallologocentric discourse and its specular logic of the same (the Law of the Father). As Irigaray (1985b) notes, "Demanding to be equal presupposes a term of comparison. Equal to what? What do women want to be equal to? Men? A wage? A public position? Equal to what? Why not to themselves?" (p. 32). The call for sameness does not rupture the entrenched binary that might constitute a new ethics, which might free women *and* men and, ultimately, transform sexual relations. Wittig reflects a similar sentiment in her essay, "One is not born a woman." As she observes, "What the concept 'woman is wonderful' accomplishes is that it retains for defining women the best features (best according to whom?) which oppression has granted us, and it does not radically question the categories 'man' and 'woman,' which are political categories and not natural givens" (Wittig, 1992, 13-14). Both see a larger transformation as necessary.

How, then, can women be represented within the commercial media system, with its patriarchal, capitalist structural foundation and its inherited phallovisual discursive formulations? Working within the system to effect change, as illustrated by von Dorn's (2002) interesting study of how the women working at Nike's ad agency, Wieden & Kennedy, tried, with only limited success and satisfaction, to subvert the sexist ideology of higher-ups, can only go so far. While women are increasingly infiltrating media institutions and mass communication programs, as Creedon (1993) notes, they still face institutional, organizational, professional, and other barriers, which limit their advancement. And, indoctrinated by work routines, news values, professional practices, organizational mandates, and the dominant ideologies of our culture, it makes it less likely that, even if informed by feminism, that individual or small groups of women could effect change by working within the system. (Consider the small and bitterly fought advances won by women's groups working within the major television networks in the 1970s.)

For de Lauretis (1984), feminist media production and criticism are key for *attempting* "an articulation of the female subject and thus address[ing] women spectators in a contradictory, but not impossible space of female desire" (p. 69). The goal should not be to destruct narrative and visual pleasure but rework desire so it is not male-defined. Even with the emergence of the World Wide Web, though, and the many content creation and distribution opportunities that this offers (e.g., homepages, forums, e-mail, weblogs, etc.), de Lauretis's strategy would still be operate at the level of individual, small-group, or independent action. This, of course, can still be incredibly productive. Consider the culture-jamming group Adbusters's mock ads (including the mocking bit of pastiche, an ad, constructed similarly to Nike's early 1990s print ads, which explains why women working in the company's overseas factories Just Can't Do It because they have to work 60 hours a week and might even be killed by their governments if they complain.)

In this essay, I have attempted to map out where mass communication research stands in terms of gender research using the case of recent sports and fitness marketing to women, an object of analysis which might constitute a synechdoche of current trends, possibilities, problems, and contradictions surrounding consumer marketing to women. My goal was to (1)

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explore the limitations of traditional mass communication approaches, such as content analysis and survey research, for examining the more latent construction of sexual difference in media vehicles and (2) examine the possible contributions offered by the French "sexual difference theorists" Luce Irigaray and Helene Cixous, as well as Monique Wittig. As van Zoonen (1994) has noted, materialist and psychoanalytical approaches have much to offer such a field, grounded as it is between disciplines. Plus, changing the focus from manifest meanings to those derived from the processes of signification and desire manufacture can only add. As de Lauretis (1984, pp. 57-58) offers, "[I]t is the elision of woman that is represented in the film, rather than a positive or a negative image; and what the representation of woman *as* image, positive *or* negative, achieves is to deny women the status of subjects both on the screen and in the cinema." I heartily acknowledge that this is only a starting point: With the sway of social-psychological theories and approaches and fascination with quantitatively measurable "effects research," added to by the continuing marginalization of "gender research," such a move will be slow (and probably painful). The field is wide open for future research, debate, and the application of the theories as I have outlined them (i.e., readings of these ads). To borrow a phrase from Nike, someone needs to Just Do It!

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[1] The American Association of University Women (2001) has documented a considerable increase in girls' and women's sports participation since the enactment (and enforcement) of Title IX of the Educational Amendments of 1972, a federal policy that requires gender equity in federally-funded educational institutions, including athletic programs. Reflecting its contentious history, the legislation is currently under attack for diminishing men's opportunities in non-revenue sports.

[2] After inserting toll-free number on one of its ads, Nike reported receiving over 100, 000 enthusiastic phone calls, of which a Nike spokeswoman commented, "women call[ed] to say they loved the ads, wanted reprints to give to therapy groups and to give to their daughters" (Brown, 1992, p. 32).

[3] The title carries symbolic meaning in that it refers, in one sense, to the shiny, reflective gynecological instrument which opens a woman up for probing (by a male doctor, traditionally), and, on a deeper level, to philosophical and psychoanalytic discourse that constructs woman as a reflective surface with no identity of her own.

[4] In another essay, "Women on the Market," Irigaray (1985, p. 171) further articulates the concept of hommosexuality: "Women's bodies – through their use, consumption, and circulation—provide for the condition making social life and culture possible."

[5] The incorporation of popular interpretations of feminism into commercial advertising is not a new phenomenon. As Ewen (2001) notes, in an effort to spur consumerism, advertising in the 1920s encouraged women to be sexual beings and to self-fetishize, whereas before it had encouraged them to be thrifty and moderate. Typical appeals associated the use of products with "daintiness, beauty, romance, grace, security, and husbands" (p. 47).

[6] These cues include (1) relative size (women are shown as shorter than men); (2) feminine touch (women are shown caressing objects with fingers or their face, whereas men are featured grasping and manipulating items); (3) function ranking (women are not shown in supervisory, instructional, or executive roles); (4) family (women are enmeshed in parenting duties while men are located outside of the family circle); (5) ritualization of subordination (women are lowered physically, e.g., hunching or recumbent, lowering their face, bending their knee, canting postures, childlike guises, clowning, smiling); and (6) licensed withdrawal (e.g., women are shown turning gaze, lowering head, covering the face or mouth, eye drifting, holding onto male clothing).

[7] In communication research, "Gender has been operationalized as a pregiven category that can account for measurable differences in women's and men's speech, interaction, and mass communication behavior" (Rakow, 1986, p. 11). Reflecting its positivistic tradition and social science foundation, and the hold of Bandura's Social Learning Theory and Gerbner's Cultivation Theory, mass communication research on gender has emphasized the effects of stereotyping on audiences, as measured by attitudes toward portrayals and sex-role conformity. In addition to survey research, quantitative content analysis has commonly been used in order to document the presence and

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absence of female characters and patterns in gender stereotyping. Sociologist's Gaye Tuchman's (1978) observation that women were "symbolically annihilated" in mass media (need page number) is a representative, and influential, example of early work. Pingree, Hawkins, Butler, and Paisley's (1976) scale for measuring gender-role stereotypes in advertising is also illustrative of the functionalist approach described by van Zoonen (1994), wherein "media reflect society's dominant social values and symbolically denigrate women, either by not showing them at all, or by depicting them in stereotypical roles" (p. 17).

Echoing similar observation of literary and speech communication research, as Moi (1985) has outlined, such research has been critiqued for not interrogating the underlying structures, material or psychic, of representation and for clinging to dualistic conceptions of gender (Rakow, 1986; van Zoonen, 1994). Progress is equated too simplistically, they argue, with having more roles for women or more women involved in content creation, for example, or in having less gender stereotyping: a "gender switch," according to Creedon (1993, p. 3). According to Ferguson (1990), early mass communication research were predicated on the myth of "cultural visibility and institutional empowerment," that were (liberal) "feminist fallacy" (p. 227). Even though there were now more images of working women in media, they were still stereotyped (and denigrated) by being represented as manipulative, aggressive, devious, bitchy, or "dotty." In response to these criticisms, critical and, to a limited extent, psychoanalytical approaches are increasingly being used in the field (van Zoonen, 1994), although, from my own observations, I have rarely, if ever, seen the work of Irigaray, Wittig, Kristeva, or Cixous featured in prominent mass communication journals.

[8] Flitterman-Lewis (1987) provides a fascinating examination of the appeals of, and challenges presented, in the application of psychoanalytic film criticism to the study of television's moving images. She sees TV as more intensive and challenging than film, working to construct the spectator differently. Rather than one "look" produced through one camera, the assemblage of elements in TV programming provide a completely different mode of address than film, with multiple "looks" coming from multiple cameras. In addition, the context is much more fragmented, with the (mostly commercially-supported) text broken up by sponsored messages and the distinction between fiction and nonfiction blurred and closure never guaranteed. Furthermore, the context of viewing is often not in a darkened viewing room, as it is in cinema, which lessens the viewer's involvement. The sustained gaze required by film spectatorship is negotiable for TV.

[9] As one illustration, both Reebok and Nike modified their women's strategies in the mid-1990s (as women's sports 'exploded') in an attempt to forge identification among female consumers with pro athletes. (They assumed that woman would seek out these role models in the same way that men did.) Later, citing market research showing that women thought female pro athletes were 'unfeminine,' both companies backed away from this strategy. Although they still heavily relied upon female athletes, they featured them more in individual poses.

[10] Although men are now being objectified in commercial advertising and editorial content, and subjected to bodily regimes, according to Bordo (1999), they are not coded in the same way, with the same effects, as are women. While mediated men may now expose more skin, they are not objectified in the same way: male power is still preserved via strategies such as "face-off masculinity" (p. 186), which feature the male model looking at the camera, revealing a prominent penis, leaning into the pose – all of which only further his dominance. (The male nude occupies his space, unlike that of the female nude discussed by Doane (1999), and the female subject-spectator also is nowhere to be found.)

[11] In one Reebok spot, images of women biking, running, weightlifting, and doing aerobics are accompanied a voiceover carrying a series of pronouncements:

> I believe 'babe' is a four-letter word. I believe sweat *is* sexy. I believe that the thinner the air gets, the clearer your head gets. I don't believe in liposuction. I don't believe that one size fits all. I believe that 70 is a long way from old. I believe in cowboys. I believe that the person who said winning isn't everything never won anything. I can't deal with hairy backs. I think you should go big or stay home. I don't believe that blondes have more fun. I believe in mass transit. I believe in howling at the moon. I believe that construction workers wear their pants like that on purpose. I believe there's an athlete in all of us. (Garfield, 1992, p. 62)

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[12] In her essay, "When the Goods Get Together," Irigaray (1985) argues that, because women are not taken seriously when they speak, they must find ways of subverting patriarchal discourse. Calling on women to "overthrow syntax" (p. 142) in order to insert themselves into history, she offers two strategies (masquerade, which I have previously described, and mimicry) as ways that would enable women to participate in exchange.

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